

GUIDELINES FOR ECUMENICAL WORSHIP:
A HANDBOOK FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

In the recent history of the ecumenical movement one can see an emerging ecumenical consensus on the eucharist or Lord's Supper. This doctrinal and liturgical consensus emanates from three sources: the liturgical movement, the ecumenical movement, and modern biblical scholarship.

High level ecumenical councils and bilateral discussions between denominations have limited importance if their influence never reaches the people of the church in local congregations. The emerging ecumenical consensus means little if it does not result in ecumenical observance of the eucharist by the people of the church.

In 1971 the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) urged its member churches and other Christian communions to begin ecumenical eucharistic services on a regular basis. The COCU term "interim eucharistic fellowship" (IEF) describes this sharing of the eucharist among Christians of different churches with the realization that IEF is not corporate union but a step on the way to union and unity.

Although COCU published a brief pamphlet in 1973 entitled Guidelines for Interim Eucharistic Fellowship, the increasing potential for a large number of IEFs across the U.S.A. calls for a more substantial practical guide for local church leaders interested in ecumenical worship.

This identifies the central question of this paper: How do congregations go about preparing for and engaging in ecumenical worship?

The answer to this question is sought by integrating the practical needs and problems of local congregations in developing a eucharistic fellowship with the underlying issues of contemporary ecumenical theology. The paper pulls together the resources from various ecumenical bodies, the reported experience of several IEFs across the nation, and the author's own experience in ecumenical worship.

The problem of motivation for ecumenical worship is addressed first with a number of practical suggestions being offered for local church use. Then a basic process for developing an IEF in a community of churches is set forth. This process includes how to convene a representative planning committee, a step-by-step agenda for the IEF planning committee, and special considerations during implementation. Three models for IEFs are suggested to help a community develop a viable IEF design for its particular situation. The advantages and disadvantages of each model are discussed based on actual IEF experience.

A separate chapter is devoted to evaluation of ecumenical worship. The critical points of the IEF process each have particular concerns for evaluation. These as well as overall evaluation criteria for ecumenical worship are discussed.

A major part of the paper deals with the theology of the eucharist in ecumenical perspective. The major theological issues which underlie the practical differences between churches are examined in simplified form suitable for lay study and discussion. In addition to general trends of eucharistic thought, the issues discussed include the presence of Christ in the eucharist, the relation of valid ministries to the eucharist, and the concept of the eucharist as sacrifice.

This practical handbook for local church leaders attempts to meet an urgent need of the churches in the U.S.A. It brings the important ecumenical breakthroughs out from scholarly journals and makes them available and understandable for local church leaders. Only in this way can the emerging ecumenical consensus on the eucharist be translated into actual eucharistic fellowship among people and churches.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Most Christians today are accustomed to the idea that the church is divided. This attitude is understandably common because divisions in the church have existed for so long that generation after generation has grown up in a divided church. Christianity in the U.S.A. also shows the effects of ideological and sociological factors which make it seem entirely appropriate that Christians should have a "supermarket's choice" of churches in which to participate voluntarily. This "supermarket mentality" appears most disturbingly in the observance of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist.

Few Christians would assert that Jesus intended his memorial meal to take place in separate, exclusivistic divisions among his followers. Yet because our vision of one united church is so blurred and distorted, to most Christians a divided table is neither alarming nor even uncomfortable.

Despite the long histories of doctrinal disputes in the church and the consequent separation of Christians from one another at the Lord's Supper, now some Christians are experiencing the singular joy of eucharistic fellowship across denominational lines. The importance of these expressions of unity in the Lord's Supper cannot be overstated. When individuals and congregations worship together and partake of One Bread and One Cup they are giving testimony to and participating in the One Body of Christ at its most important level.

High level ecumenical councils certainly provide a necessary

and important aspect of the church's quest for unity, but any agreement or consensus there has little meaning if the people of the church in its local expressions do not know or care about or participate in it as well.

Furthermore, the local participation in eucharistic fellowship is both a means to live our way toward unity as well as an expression of unity itself. Each sincere celebration of the eucharist promises the presence of Christ and our communion with him and one another. As a celebrative participation in the One Body of Christ, eucharistic fellowship is a joyous expression of unity at that time and place, but also it is an expression of Christian lives directed toward full unity of the Church Universal.

How has this eucharistic fellowship come about? Looking to the history of the ecumenical movement we can see an emerging consensus on the doctrine of the eucharist. Consensus statements in various ecumenical bodies and bilateral discussions have given food for thought for the churches for several decades. But in recent years no other ecumenical group has made such significant progress concerning the eucharist as the Consultation on Church Union (COCU).¹ Its significance is that its consensus on the eucharist is more than a "paper unity." It is acted out in eucharistic fellowships across the United States.

¹COCU consists of ten denominations: African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Episcopal Church, National Council of Community Churches, Presbyterian Church in the U.S., United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

In 1971 COCU's tenth plenary boldly recommended to its member churches and other Christian communions that they "move in the near future to an interim eucharistic fellowship on some regular basis."² Having agreed on a mutually acceptable Order of Worship³ in 1968, COCU's Worship Commission prepared a brief pamphlet in 1973 entitled Guidelines for Interim Eucharistic Fellowship. This pamphlet was intended to aid congregations who are committed to working out the meaning of celebrating the eucharist together.

Now, over half a decade after the plenary's recommendation, over thirty interim eucharistic fellowships (IEFs) are in progress across the U.S.A. As the number of IEFs increases there is a greater need for a more substantial, practical guide for interested local churches.

This identifies the central question of this paper. How do congregations go about preparing for and engaging in ecumenical worship? Two further questions are implied by the first. What process will prepare a congregation of one communion to share the Lord's Supper with integrity and sensitivity with other congregations? What theological issues underlie the practical differences which for so long have divided the Lord's Table?

²COCU, Digest, X (1971), 36. The only other ecumenical program which comes near the advances of COCU is from the Lutheran Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, France. See "Eucharistic Hospitality," Dialog, XII (Summer 1973), 224-230. Also see Charles M. Austin, "Eucharistic Hospitality," Lamp, LXXII (January 1974), 20-22.

³COCU, An Order of Worship (Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1968).

Three limits to the scope of this project must be set forth at the outset. First, our attention will be directed to eucharistic worship. The almost universally accepted norm of Christian worship is the historic pairing of Word and Sacrament. If our guidelines for ecumenical worship do not focus on the normative form of worship we will not achieve our purpose. Also, eucharistic worship is one of the focal points in the confluence of the ecumenical movement, the liturgical movement, and modern biblical scholarship.

Second, we will limit our discussion to the churches which have expressed their openness to eucharistic fellowship, especially the ten COCU churches. While other bilateral and conciliar negotiations have made significant progress in recent years, COCU alone has arrived at this practical phase of implementation at the local church level. Likewise, it is hardly appropriate to suggest guidelines for ecumenical worship prohibited or discouraged by denominational authorities.

Finally, it should be reiterated that the target audience for this project is the clergy and laity of local churches. A detailed thesis on eucharistic theology is not intended here. The theological issues discussed will be presented in summary form with detailed original source data indicated in the footnotes.

The single fundamental assumption on which this project is grounded is that Christ intends that Christians worship and eat his supper in unity. While scholars may disagree as to whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal or the common "fellowship meal" (chabûrah)

of Judaism, it is clear that in either case it was a ritual meal.⁴ Sacred meals in virtually all religions are notable for their symbolizing the unity of the community at the meal table with one another and with the divine.

In the biblical tradition God is revealed in concrete existential manifestations in history. In the Passover meal the saving presence of God is recalled and relived in the communal eating of bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and the paschal lamb. This sacred meal was reinterpreted by the early Christians to signify the definitive activity of God in the world in Jesus. Where the Jewish ritual meal recalled the deliverance from the captivity of the People of God in Egypt, the Christian meal points to Christ's deliverance of people from the enslavement of sin.⁵

As we understand the Jewish background of Jesus and the context in which he ate the last supper with his disciples, we realize that unity among those who eat the meal of remembrance is an essential understanding. It follows then that celebration of the Lord's Supper in separate and closed communities denies the full meaning Jesus intended when he ate with his disciples long ago. Indeed as we exclude other Christians from our tables, so will we deny ourselves the fullness of fellowship that is offered in the Lord's Supper. And as we open our tables to all who respond to Christ's invitation to eat with him, so

⁴Tad W. Guzie, Jesus and the Eucharist (New York: Paulist Press, 1974), p. 44.

⁵Pierre Benoit, Roland E. Murphy, and Bastiaan Van Iersel (eds.), The Breaking of Bread (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), p. 2.

will we be opened to receive the full joy and presence of Christ in his supper.

Clarification of several terms is necessary at this point. Various titles have been applied to the Christian ritual meal of bread and the cup. It is called "the Eucharist," "the Lord's Supper," "Holy Communion," "the Divine Liturgy," and "the Mass." None of these excludes another but rather each term brings a unique emphasis and understanding.

"Eucharist" denotes thanksgiving for what God has done and does for us in Jesus Christ. "The Lord's Supper" makes it clear that our Lord Jesus Christ is the host. "Holy Communion" stresses participation in the gifts bestowed in Christ and fellowship with him and his people. "Liturgy" underlines the link between the work of prayer and service in the world. "The Mass" points to the perfect sacrifice of Christ on our behalf.⁶

The term "interim eucharistic fellowship" (IEF) means the sharing of the eucharist among Christians of different churches. The adjective "interim" expresses the realization that IEF is not corporate union, "but is a vital step along the road toward fuller unity/union."⁷

There are many studies on eucharistic theology, a lesser number on ecumenical worship and only a few resources focusing on the local church's participation in ecumenical eucharistic worship.⁸ The general works vary greatly in purpose. There are purely investigative studies of the nature of the eucharist seen from limited confessional perspectives.

⁶COCU, A Plan of Union for the Church of Christ Uniting (Princeton: 1970), p. 35.

⁷COCU, Guidelines for Interim Eucharistic Fellowship (Princeton: 1973), p. 4.

⁸A list of recommended works is found at Bibliography B.

There are collections of investigative studies made by several scholars from different churches assembled under one cover to encourage ecumenical perspective on the eucharist. There are position papers prepared with the specific intent of stating a confessional stance for ecumenical discussions (e.g. papers prepared in advance of Faith and Order conferences). And there are studies produced ecumenically, that is, a group statement made by persons of different churches. Such statements may or may not be officially supported by the denominations represented.

Most of these studies are scholarly works not intended for the novice. A singular exception is the Living Room Dialogue series begun in 1965 as a joint Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant venture.⁹ As the title implies, these books are study guides for informal gatherings of laypersons to discuss common beliefs and differences. As we shall note later, this process bears significantly on our project.

Several documents from COCU also have particular importance for the project. We have already mentioned the mutually acceptable Order of Worship and Guidelines for Interim Eucharistic Fellowship. A newsletter, In Community, is now published by COCU for the purpose of sharing the experience of local IEFs across the country.

The importance of our topic should be clear. Those who have eaten the Lord's Supper in a fellowship which transcends division know the unique fulfillment that can never quite be experienced in exclusively denominational worship. Interim eucharistic fellowship can give a

⁹James J. Young (ed.) Third Living Room Dialogues (New York: Friendship Press, 1970), p. 7.

glimpse of the full vision of unity that is our goal. It can provide a celebration of the Lord's Supper as the Lord himself intended it: in unity.

Our intention in this paper is to integrate meeting the practical needs of local church leaders in developing a eucharistic fellowship in a community of churches with the underlying issues of contemporary eucharistic theology.

Now that we have introduced the project, let us proceed. Chapter Two deals with the process by which individual congregations can prepare for and engage in ecumenical eucharistic worship. The theological issues which underlie many of the practical and pastoral problems are identified and discussed in Chapter Three. Then Chapter Four gives suggestions for evaluating ecumenical worship.

Chapter 2

PREPARING CONGREGATIONS FOR ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

To suggest one process for congregations interested in working toward ecumenical worship would be foolish. Each congregation has a particular set of factors influencing the ways it goes about its life. The same can be said for any community in which ecumenical worship might take place. Our approach therefore is to suggest a variety of ways in which congregations might proceed. These suggestions are drawn from many sources including guidelines from COCU, the experience of ecumenical worship by IEFs and other eucharistic communities, and my own experience.

To discuss how congregations can prepare for ecumenical worship the chapter is divided into three sections. First, the problem of motivation for ecumenical worship will be discussed. Then we will deal with congregational actions which lay the foundation for ecumenical worship. Then we will discuss the specific actions which can be undertaken to plan and organize ecumenical worship with other congregations. In many situations these two processes (foundation building and actual ecumenical programming) will occur simultaneously. In others the gradual laying of a firm ecumenical base might go on for a year or more before visible programs emerge.

MOTIVATION FOR ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

Probably the greatest single obstacle that stands in the way of ecumenical worship among congregations is motivation. If a large number

of people of several congregations really wanted to share the eucharist together it would happen. An old adage sums up the situation: Where there's a will, there's a way.

So the very first problem that must be addressed here is how Christians can become motivated to participate in ecumenical worship. Only after that can we proceed to discussing particular steps in the process. Before we try to find the "way" we must have the "will."

Alongside the general lack of motivation for ecumenical worship is a lack of motivation against it. Most Christians in mainline protestantism today do not care about ecumenical worship one way or another. Largely responsible for these attitudes is the fact that Christians have become so accustomed to the divided state of the church that little concern is given to its unity.

A decade ago there was a certain ecumenical stir in the churches prompted on the world scale by Vatican II and in the U.S.A. by the Consultation on Church Union. Indeed some who saw the cover of A Plan of Union in 1970 thought that the united church was just around the corner. Whatever ecumenical excitement reached the grassroots of the church then has certainly worn off by now.

Eight Suggestions

Despite this apparently apathetic situation there are important attitudes in congregations that can be fostered to increase the openness and motivation toward ecumenical worship. Listed below are eight suggestions for improving ecumenical motivation.

First, we must help the local church understand itself as part

of the One Universal Church. How we talk about other Christian bodies often indicates that we really think of them as opponents instead of brothers and sisters in one family household.

Second, as we understand the universal claims of Christianity we should also think about the implications of universalism for unity. That the roots of the ecumenical movement grew out of the missionary experience testifies to the notion that a single Christian gospel was needed to be authentic to the world. It has taken much longer, however, for the Christians who sent missionaries in ecumenical cooperation to see the need for unity of the Christian witness at home as well as abroad.

The growing sense that "our way is not the only way" is an axiom of our increasingly pluralistic culture. This attitude can have both positive and negative effects on ecumenical motivation. If it is seen that the many "ways" of Christianity can be mutually enriching of each other in the common larger "Way," then the effect is positive. But if this pluralistic attitude is interpreted as "Let them do it their way and we will do it ours," then we really only have tolerant sectarianism.

Fourth, a congregation which is exposed to the history of the church understands to a greater extent the common roots that are shared by almost all churches. Furthermore, the recent history of the church shows the remarkable converging trends on issues which once caused bitter controversy.

Motivation and openness can also be increased by the intentional use of appropriate acts of worship of other traditions. The use of classic prayers or creeds can help foster a sense of common heritage

and faith with all Christians in all times and places. Likewise the hymns sung in one tradition may come from the pens of prominent figures of other traditions (e.g. Luther, Wesley, etc.) Singing these hymns can give opportunity for a short comment about the author and his or her contribution to the common faith.

The last three in our list of eight suggestions have tangible practical value where the first five try to influence basic attitudes. There are many activities and programs that are desirable in churches which simply cannot be supported by small congregations. Ecumenical cooperation can solve many of these dilemmas. Examples of such programs might be a college age youth group, a community food and clothes closet for the needy, an orchestra or handbell choir, an audio-visual resource center, etc. Many such ideas are never tried ecumenically because of the immediacies of parish life. A colloquial expression of this syndrome says it like this: When you are up to your neck in alligators, it is difficult to think about draining the swamp. Indeed the "swamp draining" effect of ecumenical cooperation among churches could relieve the pressures of several parish "alligators." We note that none of these ideas for cooperation had anything to do with ecumenical worship per se, but all of them increase the positive motivation for ecumenical activity in general.

A seventh suggestion comes from situations experienced by many families. Because of marriages across denominational lines, families and generations within families are often ecclesiastically split. One minister told me of several families in her congregation who looked forward so much to the annual ecumenical communion service on Maundy

Thursday so that they could all share the Lord's Supper together as whole families. Similar motivation can come from wanting to share the eucharist with acquaintances at work, school, or the neighborhood.

Finally, there are probably a number of Christians today who can be motivated to participate in ecumenical worship but who are very uncomfortable with the thoughts of structural unity that grew out of misconceptions of A Plan of Union in 1970. We must be careful here not to advocate a "spiritual unity" which will never take on organic visible form in the world. But ecumenical worship does provide an excellent starting place for Christians to have a taste of what unity is like.

These eight suggestions for improving motivation for ecumenical activity are meant to spark the imagination of local church leadership. It is by no means an exhaustive list.

Mutual Recognition of Members

As we have mentioned earlier, unfortunately few actions that come out of high level ecumenical conversations ever affect the congregational level of the churches. This may not be true, however, in the case of a major ecumenical step taken by COCU in 1974. In its twelfth plenary, COCU agreed on an affirmation entitled "Toward the Mutual Recognition of Members" and referred it to the respective denominational bodies for study.¹

¹COCU, "Toward the Mutual Recognition of Members: An Affirmation," Mid-Stream, XV (April 1974), 335.

The affirmation includes three key statements that (1) all who are baptised into Christ are members of His church and share in His ministry through the People of God, (2) membership in a particular church is membership in the whole People of God, and (3) unity in Christ's Universal Church through baptism does not abolish membership (enrollment) in a particular church, nor does it mean plural simultaneous membership in several churches.²

Of equal importance to the contents of the affirmation is the technique that was adopted along with it. Each church was called to conduct a theological and pastoral inquiry into the implications which flow from the affirmation. COCU provided the churches with nine questions each of which seeks positive responses to implications regarding areas of church life.

A study of these implications will increase the ecumenical motivation in the manner we seek. The COCU inquiry connects mutual recognition of members with acceptance of different modes of baptism, with a new appreciation for the importance of church membership, and with our Lord's invitation to all the faithful to eat at His Table. Other questions deal with implications of mutual recognition of members for such important issues as the recognition of ministers, both male and female, racial and social justice, and developing the ethnic and cultural diversity in our congregations. Two of the nine questions seek the connection of mutual recognition of members with the repudiation

²Joseph Eagen, "COCU and Baptism: A New and Creative Ecumenical Step," Mid-Stream, XV (July 1976), 234.

of proselytism and with developing church discipline in accordance with emerging ecumenical norms.

Mutual recognition of members attempts to do what no other ecumenical affirmation has done: to involve the grassroots level of the church. For our interest in increasing ecumenical motivation, mutual recognition of members provides an ideal starting place. Because all the COCU churches have adopted the affirmation-inquiry method, study and discussion by several churches of a community could occur without denominational objections.

Characteristics of Ecumenical Worship

Two comments about ecumenical worship must be made before proceeding further. Ecumenical worship is more than non-denominational worship. The latter implies either that in the particular time of worship all participants pretend that there are no denominations, or that the worship service itself is non-denominational, i.e. not from any particular denomination. Both implications are inauthentic. First, there are denominations and denominational practices which restrict the acts of worship which can be done across denominational lines. Second, a so-called non-denominational order of worship may easily become a bland listing of all the common elements of the participating churches minus all the elements which may be controversial or sensitive.

My purpose here is not to belittle the many fine non-denominational services which Christians have attended for many years. Often these services on days such as Thanksgiving or Good Friday do show to the community the cooperation and fellowship of the church people of a

city or town. But, I do intend to differentiate between non-denominational worship and ecumenical worship. The latter affirms honest recognition of differences that remain in the path while it presses toward the goal of unity. So ecumenical worship simply does not avoid the elements of worship that are subjects of debate or controversy. It seeks to include all the normative acts of Christian worship, therefore including the eucharist, despite the fact that discussion and sensitive issues remain.

A second important characteristic of ecumenical worship is that it grows out of a genuine community of faith. Some have argued that truly ecumenical worship has not yet come about because it has not grown out of authentic ecumenical community.³ This position seems to me to be so absolute that it eliminates from the category of ecumenical worship many authentic liturgical expressions of Christian unity. But the position does raise an extremely valid concern. One of the clear and major goals of ecumenical worship is for it to express the faith of a genuine community. All ecumenical assemblies must guard against their tendency to become isolated liturgical fanfares instead of ongoing events in the progressive and continued life of the churches toward unity.⁴

The fact that COCU has agreed upon a mutually acceptable worship service can sometimes undermine the nature of ecumenical worship

³Ann Patrick Ware, "A Brief for Truly Ecumenical Worship," Christian Century, XCIII (April 21, 1976), 387.

⁴COCU, Guidelines for Interim Eucharistic Fellowship (Princeton: 1973), p. 3.

itself. Liturgy is by definition a "work of the people." No individual or committee can ever "draw up" the worship for a particular community. This is not to say that the COCU Order of Worship should not be used. Rather each particular community must seek to express its own reality in worship. This could be done by using the COCU liturgy in tasteful combination with aspects which are unique to the community, e.g. music, physical setting, style of leadership, etc.

It does not seem possible to decide in an a priori fashion which should come first: ecumenical community or ecumenical worship. If several churches already work together in a community they should find expression for their Christian life together in regular eucharistic fellowship. But also, if several congregations desire to begin a cooperative relationship in a community, it is certainly appropriate for them to begin by worshipping together. In either case, the ecumenical community will develop as will the depth of meaning in ecumenical worship.

We began this chapter by asserting that lack of motivation is probably the greatest single obstacle to ecumenical worship. We have suggested ways to increase motivation but it never can be assumed that this issue is solved. Ecumenical work often can be discouraging and frustrating. It is tempting to return to comfortable conditions of confessional isolation. Always before us must be the vision of the Body of Christ, one body with many functions and parts but not divided. Motivation is a continuing concern as we look now at the process toward ecumenical worship.

BUILDING AN ECUMENICAL BASE

One of the reasons why there is an emerging theological consensus at the bilateral and conciliar ecumenical levels is that the people involved there are historically informed. They know church history, their own denominational history, and in many cases, they know the histories of many other denominations as well. Most of the laity do not have this kind of historical knowledge and appreciation. There may be some vague conceptions about the founders of the movements or some polemical notions about why one movement split from another, but generally we are not historically informed. Thus many of the convictions about who we are and why we do things the way we do in our churches are based on flimsy foundations. "We always have done it that way" is most often the cornerstone.

This is an inadequate base on which to work ecumenically. Interchange, mutual learning and appreciation need to be grounded in knowledge and openness, not ignorance and prejudice. So first in congregational preparation is the study of church history and worship.

In this paper we can only suggest the main points to emphasize in the study of church history and suggest how appreciation for history might be increased. Reading lists of histories of liturgy and surveys of church history are found in Bibliography C.

Foremost in the study is the question: Where does our denomination fit into the larger picture of Church? The answer to this helps Christians see their relationship to other denominations and to the Church as a whole in its historical process. Further questions which

illuminate the main question are: What brought us about as a denomination? Why did we split from some other body of Christians or why did they split from us? What contribution did this make to Christianity? What did we lose in this separation? Are the original causes of the split still operative? Have they lessened, disappeared altogether, or perhaps even reversed sides? What are the similarities with other religious movements or denominations?

In the study we must guard against becoming engrossed in confessional battles and debates of centuries ago. Rather the spirit of the study should stress the historic convergence among various churches which transcends the divisive disputes of previous generations.

How is the historical consciousness to be raised? In every congregation there probably is a small number of people who would be willing to do a group study over a period of a few months. This provides one type of experience in the congregation which, if done well, could have a wider effect beyond the group itself. But it certainly will not reach the whole congregation. The appreciation for history can be increased in a number of other ways, however. These suggestions or their variations could work in many churches. The church library could sponsor a series of book reviews and displays of books of historical interest. More emphasis on church history can be added to membership instruction for children as well as adults. Sermons, individually or in a series, can carry a great deal of historical enthusiasm into a congregation. Guest speakers or preachers from colleges or seminaries would provide additional resources for the church service or special gatherings. Fellowship dinners or Sunday evening programs can feature

speakers, plays, films, or any program which celebrates our traditions.

The study of worship should include an understanding of early Christian worship with its Jewish antecedents and the development of worship through the ages. In the development of worship the study should show how particular denominational practices developed. Were the reasons theological or cultural, or a combination of both?

As in the study of church history, emphasis should be placed on "What did our denomination contribute to the church?" and the complementary question "What aspects of worship are lacking in our tradition?"

Attention should be given to the renewed interest in worship in this century, the Liturgical Movement. Its importance for ecumenical worship cannot be overstated.

It seeks a recovery of those norms of liturgical worship of the Bible and the early church which lie behind Reformation divisions and medieval distortions, and which are fundamental to Christian liturgy in every time and place. It aims, however, not at an attempt to resuscitate the liturgy of the early church in the twentieth century, but at the restatement of the fundamentals in forms and expressions which can enable the liturgy to be the living prayer and work of the church today.⁵

A congregation might accomplish the study of worship by worshipping according to the historic liturgies of the church on certain occasions. While these experiences have an obvious educational character, they also can be meaningful worship experiences for the congregation. Visits to other churches could be helpful and educational to small numbers of a congregation, as could a survey of the history of liturgy by an adult

⁵H. Ellsworth Chandlee, "The Liturgical Movement," in J. G. Davies (ed.) A Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 216ff.

study group or worship committee.

The normal worship service of the church can also be a place where education about worship takes place. Occasionally the worship leader or minister could explain why certain parts of the service occur in a given sequence, or what the liturgical symbols and colors mean, etc.

Certainly we do not intend to attempt massive educational programs in church history and worship, but as we have noted in the section on motivation for ecumenical worship, a definite prerequisite for ecumenical worship is the sense that exclusive and unreflective denominational worship is not responsive to the unity which Christ intends for his Church. Changing this attitude of parochialism is the main goal of all the preparation within congregations. In this context, knowledge about church history and worship is important primarily as a means to the end of Christian unity.

There are few communities today in which the churches do not cooperate in at least one matter of common concern. In most cases, some program or mission involvement with other congregations has already begun. In a community of churches where ecumenical motivation is high, one of the first questions that is raised in any discussion of program or mission is "Can we do it together?" The spirit of this question builds a team force in a community out of several individual congregations.

One of the arguments often directed at any program of cooperation or consolidation is that it will become too big and individual identity will be lost in the bigness. If all ecumenical cooperation

did was just to join programs together then this criticism would be valid. But ecumenical cooperation can maintain smallness or intimacy by decentralizing a cooperative program in geographic areas. For example, if several churches were to have prayer or study groups during Lent, they might decide to do this ecumenically and attend the group nearest their home.⁶

The central aim of this whole discussion about building an ecumenical base within congregations is again attitudinal. A "non-compartmentalized" understanding of the Christian life characterizes the attitude we seek. Once we begin to understand the interpenetrating relationships of mutual recognition of members, cooperative efforts in program and mission, and common gatherings of worship, we will be further on the way toward unity.

I have given considerable attention to motivation toward ecumenical worship especially in the laity. I believe this phase is absolutely essential to authentic and meaningful ecumenical worship. Now we turn to the "how to" phase of planning, organizing and implementing ecumenical worship in a community.

STEPS TOWARD ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

This section consists of four parts dealing with initial actions, the planning committee, the planning agenda, and implementation

⁶For more on local church interaction see: COCU, Guidelines for Local Interchurch Action, 1969, and "Pastoral and Practical Reflections for Local Ecumenical Action," Ecumenical Trends, IV (October 1975), 132ff.

of plans. These steps suggest various ways of starting and developing ecumenical worship. The suggestions naturally must be modified to the particular needs of the community, but discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of several approaches should be beneficial.

Since the publication of Guidelines for IEF considerable attention has been given to the experience of pilot IEFs. They have provided the COCU Commission on IEF with some of the early data necessary to any new enterprise. The IEF Commission has summarized these lessons learned, especially from the experience of the Richmond, Virginia IEF,⁷ in a two page leaflet, Steps to Interim Eucharistic Fellowship.⁸

In the present paper we will not duplicate the contents of the COCU documents, but rather we will discuss their highlights along with alternative methods of developing ecumenical worship.

Getting Started

Starting any journey begins with a single step. In this case the first step is for the person or persons interested in ecumenical worship to gather together a preliminary group. This group should not necessarily become the planning committee but has the function of making the contacts to start the IEF process with an inclusive and diverse group of leaders. Thus the "contact group" can be small and carefully composed.

⁷COCU, "Interim Eucharistic Fellowship in Richmond, Virginia, A Summary Report." Cited as COCU, "Richmond Summary Report."

⁸COCU, Steps to Interim Eucharistic Fellowship.

The group should be inclusive in two important regards. First, it is important that ecumenical worship include as many congregations of a community as possible from the beginning. If the contact group had several meetings before it realized that a certain church or group of churches were not represented, it might be difficult to ever gain their full support if they felt they were latecomers or were forgotten. Also, their contributions to the early meetings would have been missed.

In a large city the contact group should seek to include middle judicatory leaders and other key leaders of groups of churches. For example, a well known Baptist minister might be the contact for the whole group of evangelical churches of a city. In a smaller city or town, the contact group might simply consist of representatives from each church.

Second, the contact group should seek to include ethnic minorities, laity and clergy, men and women. It is very important that the contact group consist of persons who can persuasively enlist the services of a larger, more representative and inclusive group who will be the planning group for the IEF.⁹

The contact group should first read and discuss the COCU literature cited above and then discuss how IEF might take shape in their community. Their chief concern, however, is how to convene the kind of

⁹In this project I do not want to identify ecumenical worship solely with IEF. While I believe IEF to be the most promising concept of ecumenical worship in the U.S.A. it may not work in some communities because of its identification with COCU. If the specific terminology and identification with COCU are stumbling blocks for some people, this should not prevent them from engaging in ecumenical worship.

planning committee which can carry out a pilot series of ecumenical eucharistic services.

In Steps to IEF it is advised that congregational representatives be invited to comprise the planning committee in cases where a group of churches already has a history of cooperation. The method of enlisting individuals well known for ecumenical interests and for having influence with congregations and/or judicatory leaders is recommended as a necessary preliminary to later congregational involvement.¹⁰

If IEF is to occur under the auspices of an existing ecumenical organization such as a council of churches, attention must be given to the inclusiveness of the organization. Eucharistic fellowship could be the significant act of reconciliation which could broaden the membership of the council. It could provide the Table around which conservatives and liberals, blacks, browns, and whites, rich and poor, could gather in Christian love.

There are advantages and disadvantages to working on IEF through the channels of the existing organization. The full inclusiveness of the membership would be an important factor in deciding which way to proceed.

It should be clear that what I have called the "contact group" in this project is only a preliminary group which functions solely to convene a larger, more representative IEF planning committee. The COCU literature simply mentions such a preliminary group without stressing the different aspects of its important function of getting the right

¹⁰COCU, Steps, p. 1.

people together. The contact group is the necessary link between a few excited ecumenists and a properly constituted representative planning group that can carry the load of IEF's work.

The Planning Committee

The planning committee initially should be convened by one of the members of the preliminary "contact group" who will continue to work on the planning committee. The first task of the committee is to review its membership to insure that it is as broadly inclusive and representative as possible. It may be that some congregations or groups of congregations will not be willing to participate in the IEF planning. COCU advises as follows:

Respect differences of conscience which exist. An attitude of openness and understanding should be held toward those congregations or members which view eucharistic sharing in this manner either with serious reservations or lethargy. Dealing with their responses may prove to be highly significant for your process, even though in some instances it will delay or limit the observance in your community.¹¹

No guideline can be provided stating how long IEF should be delayed because of the reluctance of a congregation or group. Only openness and sensitive understanding of each particular situation can lead the planning committee to a decision of when to proceed with a limited IEF and when to wait for fuller participation.

A second concern of the planning committee comes from the experience of the Richmond IEF. The participation of a judicatory leader

¹¹COCU, Guidelines (1973), p. 5.

on the Richmond IEF Committee greatly enhanced participation and support from other influential church leaders of the city.¹² The planning committee should try to receive judicatory support, if not directly, then through the committee members' consultation with their respective judicatory officials.

The exploratory session(s) of the planning committee must discuss the overall concepts of IEF and its possibilities for the community. At some point the committee must decide whether or not to undertake a pilot series of IEF. If the committee votes "yes" it should then elect a chairperson and other officers it deems necessary.¹³

The Planning Agenda

Now constituted and agreed that IEF should be undertaken, the planning committee can proceed with this agenda.

1. There are several models of how an IEF can take shape within a community. The determination of which model or variation is best suited to the community is the first and most important task of the planning committee. I have chosen and named three models for the purpose of discussion.

The participant model. The Richmond IEF Committee, composed of unofficial denominational representatives, decided to limit the participation in its first few series of services by sending written

¹²COCU, "Richmond Summary Report," p. 1,2,6.

¹³COCU, Steps, p. 2.

invitations. Those who agreed to try to attend all four services in the series and returned a signed statement to that effect were considered to be "participants." These people were invited by the individual members of the IEF committee with each denomination having a quota of 15 laypersons and five clergy. In addition, the host church for each service was to provide a choir and 30 people familiar with the host church's liturgy.

The use of this system in Richmond resulted in 94 people signing up as "regular participants." Of these about 69 attended each of the four services bringing the total attendance at the celebrations to about 100, including guests and host church people. In an evaluation questionnaire completed by the participants there was unanimous response that "participation should be primarily (not to exclude occasional guests) by those who had made a commitment to attend all services 'if at all possible' within a given series."¹⁴

The congregational model. Guidelines for IEF alludes to this model when it suggests a "neutral location" such as a school auditorium, public hall, or an outdoor setting for eucharistic services. The Redlands (California) Area Community of Churches (RACC) has held an outdoor communion service using the COCU liturgy on World Wide Communion Sunday since 1975. All the churches of the town are invited with their full congregations. The service is held on Sunday mornings. RACC sponsors the event through its worship task force and although it is

¹⁴COCU, "Richmond Summary Report," p. 5.

acquainted with the IEF concept it does not consider itself an IEF as such, nor has it planned a series of eucharistic observances. The size of the community allows many of the congregations to walk from their downtown churches to the centrally located amphitheater. Some congregations processed with flowing banners, the communion elements, and a brass choir to bolster the singing. Attendance from the seven main protestant churches in the city was nearly 500 or approximately forty percent of the normal Sunday attendance of the churches.

The city/area model. The IEF in Indianapolis has operated with a combination of city-wide and area eucharistic observances. The strategy of the planning committee was to involve churches in IEF, not just interested individuals. The IEF Committee planned a city-wide service for all the clergy as the event to start IEF in the city. It was followed by a series of eucharistic celebrations in groups or clusters of churches determined by geographic area. These area meetings took place on Sunday evenings in clusters of 5 - 8 congregations.

The second city-wide service included laity and was followed again by a series of area meetings. To this point there have been no study groups connected with the services. The need was felt in the second series for an opportunity for study and fellowship in the area meetings. One area planned a series of three Monday evening meetings of theological study and discussion in the setting of informal fellowship dinners.

Discussion of the three models. The models we now consider come from three communities of greatly varying populations. Indianapolis

(the city/area model) is about twice the size of Richmond (the participant model) and over sixteen times the size of Redlands (the congregational model). This may tell us something about the relationship between a community's size and the type of IEF model which was chosen, but certainly it does not tell us everything.

Each of the three models has particular strengths and weaknesses. The participant model gives a full series of four eucharistic services to a reasonably consistent group of people. These people commit themselves to try to experience IEF in four different settings with the same community of faith. The consistency of the group allows for growing interaction and fellowship. Two disadvantages of the participant are that it does not engage whole churches (i.e. congregations) as such, and the "selected participants" concept could be seen by some as being more exclusive than denominational worship. These disadvantages are more tolerable when the participant model is understood only as a temporary starting method that will later engage whole congregations and more people.

The participant model achieves one of the COCU goals in that it regularly brings to the Lord's Table people "who rarely discover each other there or elsewhere."¹⁵ This achievement is mitigated, however, by the small number of people involved (one hundred persons in each city-wide service) and the possible criticism that there really may not be an authentic "community of faith."

The emphasis on IEF's bringing people together who do not meet

¹⁵COCU, Steps, p. 2.

elsewhere must be carefully understood. The intent behind this emphasis from COCU is to guard against IEF's occurring only among the culturally congenial congregations. It would be very unfortunate, for example, for eucharistic fellowship to happen only among the predominantly white middle-class congregations, or only among the hispanic congregations, or only among the congregations on a particular street. Ecumenical worship must never be in the position of reinforcing the cultural patterns of prejudice and poverty.

The city/area model can be especially helpful in this regard. The city-wide celebrations can bring together a broadly representative group that cuts across lines of race, sex and economic status. Likewise, but with greater difficulty, the area celebrations of the IEF could do this. The areas or sectors of the city would need to be thoughtfully determined by the planning committee. Many of our cities have easily identifiable neighborhoods of predominantly poor, white, wealthy, ethnic minority, or older people. In most cases it is possible to determine the IEF areas so that they cut across these racial and economic lines but yet still maintain some degree of geographical proximity in the IEF areas.

Some were initially critical of the city/area model in Indianapolis because it began with an all-clergy service. While any symbol of exclusion of the laity opens itself to valid criticism, the initial city-wide service did perform the essential function of getting IEF started with the enthusiasm and support of the ministers of the city. It might be compared to the kick-off rally of a political campaign. The first rally does not dictate the entire style of the party or the

candidate, but has a specialized function of getting things started with gusto.

The congregational model has many advantages. The eucharistic celebration occurs at the normal time of worship for the churches. There is an obvious visible sense of many people sharing One Eucharist. Entire congregations participate in the event. It is not an extra service in addition to the normal worship pattern of the congregations.

This model works very well in a community that is small in population and physical size. It will not work well in large cities as the normal IEF service. A massive celebration in a stadium is of course possible, but probably not feasible or desirable.

Variations or combinations of the models give further ideas for particular community problems. The congregational model might work well for the area celebrations of the city/area model, because the "areas" of Indianapolis could be geared to give the smallness of the Redlands model.

Another variation on any of the three models is a bilateral or trilateral phase. By this I mean a series of eucharistic observances in which congregations are grouped in pairs or trios. For example, in an IEF of nine churches, there would be three simultaneous observances of three congregations each in one series during the year. This method gives more depth to the involvement and sharing between congregations without losing the breadth and diversity of the total IEF.

This first item of the agenda of the planning committee must receive the committee's finest efforts because it determines the overall concept of IEF for the city. Careful attention to all the factors

involved in the design and selection of the model will save major program changes at a later time.

2. Once the model is chosen specific plans can be made concerning these items:

- What will be the "regular basis" of the IEF? How many celebrations per year and on which days?
- Where will the services take place?
- How will the services come about? (This involves the more detailed mechanics of the model which has been chosen.)
- What liturgies will be used? (Host church, COCU, etc.)

3. Now that the model is understood by the planning committee in specific terms for the community, a plan for preparing the congregations for the IEF must be formulated. In many of the eucharistic fellowships that are already operating, this preparation has not been much more than announcing and explaining the first series.

The type of preparation which I have dealt with in the section on motivation for ecumenical worship is of vital importance to IEF. It is tempting for the planning committee to shortcut this step and press on to the first series of services, but the level of participation, especially in laity, will suffer dramatically.

4. The pattern of events at each eucharistic celebration is to be decided next. Most of the IEFs have included a period of fellowship and light refreshments following the services. Some have had

Bible study and discussion groups.¹⁶ If a study/discussion phase is used I think it is more appropriate to study the theological issues of eucharistic worship than it is to have an ecumenical Bible study. Chapter Three provides material for such a theological study of the eucharist in ecumenical perspective.

5. From time to time in the planning committee's meetings attention should be paid to inclusiveness and broad representation in the committee's make-up. Churches which did not desire to participate in IEF at the beginning should be re-invited.¹⁷

6. The responsibilities of the host church should be enumerated in detail. Even in the congregational model which meets at a "neutral location" some one must take responsibility for the tasks usually done by a host church for an ecumenical event, e.g. ushers, greeters, public address system, etc.

7. The IEF planning committee may want to handle its own budget with monies received from offerings at the services. It might decide to work through the budget of the local council of churches.

8. If the participant model is used the requirements for and definition of a "participant" must be determined.¹⁸

¹⁶COCU, "Richmond Summary Report," pp. 1f.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 3,7. Also, COCU, Steps, p. 2.

¹⁸COCU, "Richmond Summary Report," p. 2.

9. Guidelines for IEF identifies seven "practical and pastoral issues" in ecumenical worship. Many of these issues are sensitive and deserve the advance attention of the IEF committee. These issues are good subjects for study and discussion after the eucharistic services, but the planning committee must insure that there are no unfortunate "surprises" to mar the eucharistic service itself.

10. Minutes, records, and reports of the IEF should be maintained from the outset and shared with others interested in ecumenical worship. The COCU IEF Commission receives reports from IEFs and shares significant information through a newsletter, In Community.

11. In addition to the great amount of work involved in getting an IEF started and developed, the planning committee also has the task of looking to the future development of IEF. After the committee is functioning well and perhaps has been enlarged and organized into task groups, one of these groups should have the tasks of evaluating the present program and making proposals for the future.

Implementation

We will not repeat here the many items discussed under the planning committee's agenda, but will focus on a few problems that will deserve attention as IEF begins.

All of the IEF services should be rehearsed in advance by the leaders. The churches have come a long and difficult way to share the Lord's Supper ecumenically. Every effort should be made to have the services themselves carried out in the best manner possible. The need

for rehearsals is especially critical in concelebrated eucharists.¹⁹

A minimum of explanatory announcements should interfere with the natural flow and beauty of the liturgy but sometimes they are necessary.

The beginning of an IEF is a significant community event. Appropriate media coverage should be arranged and would amplify the witness to the community. IEF should project an image that shows it to be both important and normal. For Christians to eat the Lord's Supper together is not abnormal: it is the norm and our denominational divisions are deviations from it.

As we mentioned earlier, ecumenical worship does not seek to hide issues of disagreement or omit them from the normative acts of Christian worship. Thus the manner of dealing with sensitive issues will be a significant indicator of the spirit of the IEF.

Evaluation and follow-up actions of the IEF will be discussed in Chapter Four.

SUMMARY

Motivation for ecumenical worship is the key that can unlock the door to eucharistic fellowship. Methods of increasing motivation for ecumenical worship in local congregations have been suggested. The process for starting and developing ecumenical worship in a community begins with building an ecumenical base grounded in knowledge of

¹⁹COCU, Guidelines (1973), p. 9.

church history and worship and in cooperation with other churches in program and mission.

Steps to ecumenical worship begin with a preliminary contact group which works to convene an inclusive and representative planning committee. This committee considers several models of IEF and then proceeds with detailed planning and implementation. Figure 1 shows a basic IEF process.

Vital to the IEF is the preparation of congregations and the ecumenical study of the theology of eucharistic worship. The next chapter addresses the latter concern.

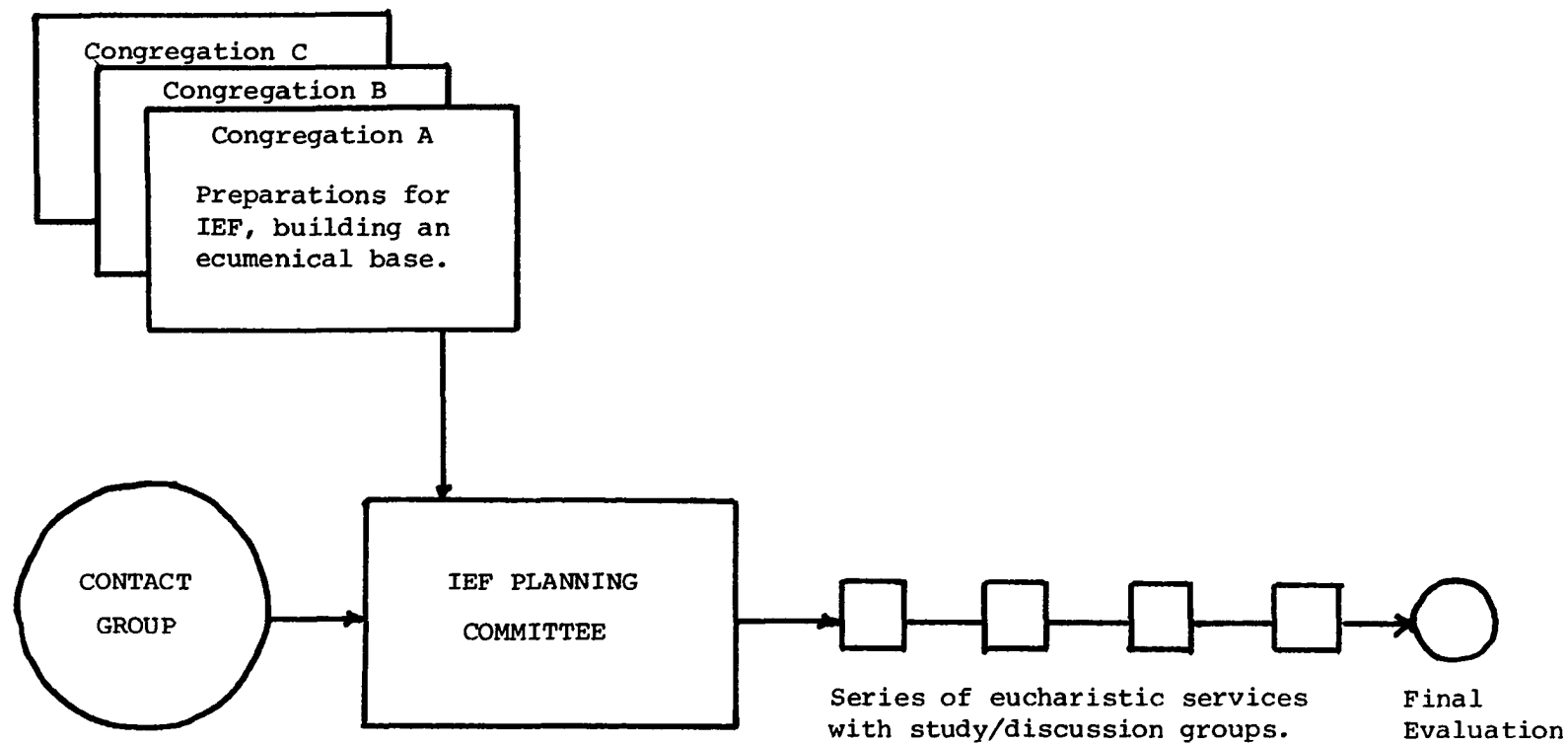


Figure 1
Basic Process for IEF

Chapter 3

THE THEOLOGY OF THE EUCHARIST
IN ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter we will look at contemporary trends in eucharistic thought and then at the major issues of eucharistic theology in ecumenical perspective. The purpose of this overview is to help church people understand the theological issues which underlie the practical differences in the ways we celebrate the eucharist. This study can provide greater depth to one's own belief about the meaning of the Lord's Supper and empathetic understanding of the reasons for different views. In the third section of the chapter a format for informal study/discussion groups will be presented.

To this point in the paper we have not included the Roman Catholic Church in our discussion. The omission has been intentional because our focus has been on those churches, especially the ones participating in COCU, which have arrived at the point of being willing to share the Lord's Supper together. The Roman Catholic Church is not there yet. The same can be said for the Orthodox.

In our present discussion of eucharistic doctrine, however, to omit the Roman Catholic viewpoint would be impossible. There are three reasons why this is so. First, no treatment of contemporary eucharistic theology can fail to take into account the understanding of the tradition which has had the eucharist as its primal sacrament since the apostolic age. All of our Protestant understanding of the eucharist is historically understood in reference to Catholic belief and

practice.

Second, in contemporary eucharistic theology the Catholic Church provides the ferment. Virtually every major Christian movement has been in dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. These bilateral conversations have given energy to the pursuit of theological agreement in many areas including the eucharist.

As we shall see later, the tangible fruit of these bilateral discussions are several substantial consensus statements on the eucharist.

Third, ecumenical worship is a continuing activity of the church's life toward unity. The orientation toward the future of the local eucharistic fellowship should anticipate the participation of Catholics. While they may not be able to participate in eucharistic fellowship right now, they could be involved in the planning committee and especially in the study/discussion groups. Since this chapter provides the main content for the proposed study groups, Catholic eucharistic thinking is included.

TRENDS IN EUCHARISTIC THOUGHT

Contemporary eucharistic thought is marked by considerable fluidity. Virtually all churches are reappraising their doctrinal positions, coming out from behind the barricades of "interconfessional polemic."¹ Trends in this fluid situation can be seen on three fronts:

¹William B. Greenspun and William A. Norgren, Living Room Dialogues (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1965) p. 234.

the liturgical movement, the ecumenical movement, and modern biblical scholarship.

The liturgical movement is the name given to the extraordinary renewal of interest in worship in the Christian churches in this century. From the beginning the movement was not anti-traditionalist but simply sought to renew the fundamental concept of worship being the common action of the people of the church, "an action which involved them in the saving work of Christ in and for the world."² Although the early developments were within the Catholic ranks in Europe, the ecumenical movement and the publishing of several journals devoted to the study of liturgy both helped to spread liturgical interest across continents and churches. Protestantism has followed the lead of Romanism and Anglicanism in cultivating a fresh openness to learning from other traditions. An emerging consensus on the liturgy is the result of these years of liturgical renewal.

The consensus has affected the practice of worship in the churches in interesting ways. While Catholics have changed to liturgy in the vernacular, many Protestants have begun to experiment with written forms of worship. As Roman priests have placed more emphasis on developing homiletical skills, Protestant ministers have been learning how to do the eucharist better. Most churches affirm congregational participation in worship and resist liturgical domination by priest or minister. Churches with elaborate and complex ceremonial are moving

²H. Ellsworth Chandlee, "The Liturgical Movement," in J. G. Davies (ed.) A Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship (New York: Macmillan, 1972) p. 217.

toward simplicity while churches which had virtually no practice of ritualistic expression or symbolic movement or dress are now using some stylized liturgical forms. Finally, a fundamental point of the emerging consensus is that the norm of Sunday worship should be the eucharist, although the practice of this norm is not yet fully realized.

Generally speaking the denominational liturgies of today tend to have the same content even though order and particular stress vary. They usually consist of several scripture readings followed by a sermon, an affirmation of faith, an intercessory prayer, and the eucharist in fourfold action (taking, blessing, breaking, and giving.)³

Certainly this consensus did not arrive overnight, but one giant landmark of the movement is the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy promulgated in 1964 by the Second Vatican Council.

The Constitution unleashes the liturgy....to become the living service of the Christian community in a way which has not been possible since the beginning of the Middle Ages.⁴

Ecumenical in scope, it is a clear statement of the theology of liturgy written with great pastoral concern for the needs of the people and sensitivity to the mission of the church in the world.

But the liturgical movement did not end with Vatican II. It continues to provide the ongoing stimulus to the church so that the liturgy will always be relevant and responsive to the church's situation.

³See introduction to John C. Kirby, Word and Action: New Forms of the Liturgy (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), p. vii ff., and Horace T. Allen, Jr., "Is There an Emerging Ecumenical Consensus Concerning the Liturgy?" Reformed Liturgy and Music, X (Spring 1976), 7-12.

⁴Chandlee, p. 220.

Examples of the trend to search for liturgical expressions which transcend and draw together different communions can be found in the work of the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET), the Joint Liturgical Group in Great Britain, and the Consultation on Church Union in the U.S.A. ICET, for example, was formed in 1969 as an ecumenical and international panel of scholars from the English speaking world. Their work has provided thirteen texts of the classic prayers and creeds which are common to all Christian confessions. Because special attention has been given to provide contemporary texts for liturgical use, the ICET materials are especially appropriate for ecumenical worship services.⁵

There are so many interpenetrating aspects of the liturgical movement and the ecumenical movement that the former may be considered part of the latter. Trends in eucharistic thought in the ecumenical movement, however, have not been concerned with the eucharistic liturgy as much as with intercommunion and the doctrine of the eucharist. By its very nature the eucharist has a central place in ecumenical discussion.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of unity: "because there is one Bread, we who are many are one Body" (1 Cor 10.17). Yet this sacrament was one of the chief causes of disunity and bitterness at the time of the Reformation: and today, though Catholics so frequently come together to pray with other Christians, they cannot share the Eucharist. The bread of unity is now the sign of

⁵See International Consultation on English Texts, Prayers We Have in Common (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); Joint Liturgical Group, The Renewal of Worship (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); and COCU, An Order of Worship (Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1968).

division.⁶

As the sacrament of unity and reconciliation⁷ the eucharist presented itself as a painful problem for delegates at the series of Faith and Order conferences beginning at Lausanne in 1927. Problems concerning intercommunion, i.e. full reciprocity at the communion tables of different churches, were initially seen more in relation to differences in conceptions of "valid ministries" than in doctrinal differences. At the second Faith and Order Conference in Edinburgh, Archbishop William Temple called the barriers against full union at the Lord's Table "the greatest of all the scandals in the face of the world."⁸

Still in 1951, the reports of the Theological Commission on Intercommunion prepared for the Conference on Faith and Order at Lund singled out the basic difference between the churches which claim the episcopal succession and the other churches as "the most formidable obstacle in the way of intercommunion."⁹ The pre-Lund document also dealt with the urgent problem of ecumenical eucharistic practice on the mission field and suggested several ways of celebrating the eucharist at ecumenical gatherings.¹⁰

⁶E. J. Yarnold in Preface to James Quinn, The Theology of the Eucharist (Notre Dame: Fides, 1973), p. 9.

⁷Gregory Baum, "Liturgy and Unity," Ecumenist, VI (November-December 1967), 97-100.

⁸Donald Baillie and John Marsh (eds.) Intercommunion (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. 5.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 34-41.

By the end of the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1961 most matters were still at an impasse despite a creative suggestion that

... if we reversed the usual order of discussion and focused on eucharistic action- what God does and calls us to do at the Lord's Table - rather than (first of all) on eucharistic administration - i.e. the problem of valid ministry - we might find a clearer way to the heart of an adequate sacramental doctrine.¹¹

One can fully appreciate the painstaking progress of eucharistic agreement in the Faith and Order Conferences only by reading the conference-by-conference accounts. Our intention here, however, is simply to be aware of the type of interface in the worldwide ecumenical movement which contributed to the emerging theological consensus on the eucharist.¹² In other ecumenical discussions of more limited proportions eucharistic agreements have also been worked out in the last several decades. These include international bilateral statements and those from the Consultation on Church Union and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.¹³

A truly remarkable occurrence in the ecumenical movement has been the radical change in the Roman Catholic Church. Before Vatican II Catholics were forbidden to engage in public religious discussion

¹¹W. A. Visser't Hooft (ed.) The New Delhi Report, p. 128. Cited in Robert McAfee Brown, The Ecumenical Revolution (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 359.

¹²A current summary of ecumenical agreement on the eucharist approved at the Faith and Order Commission meeting in Accra, 1974 is found in World Council of Churches, One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry, (Geneva: 1975). For a commentary and summary of the Faith and Order Conferences see Brown, pp. 348-371.

¹³See Bibliography D for a listing of eucharistic consensus statements.

with non-Catholics. Likewise, but with even greater intensity, canon law totally prohibited any kind of common worship.¹⁴ At Vatican II a complete turnaround occurred. The Decree on Ecumenism urged the faithful to take an active part in ecumenism, indeed to take the initiative with non-Catholics.¹⁵

Concerning the eucharist, the Decree affirmed the two main eucharistic functions were to serve as an expression of unity and as a means of grace. Thus these were far reaching implications for Catholics participating in ecumenically shared eucharist "in a discriminate fashion." But this ecumenical breakthrough was reversed by the Directory Concerning Ecumenical Matters which allowed "no provision whatsoever for the ecumenically shared Eucharist as a means of fostering Christian Unity."¹⁶

Despite some setbacks like this reversal of the spirit of the Decree on Ecumenism, we can see the slow, uneven but still forward motion of agreement on eucharistic doctrine and intercommunion in the ecumenical movement.

Biblical scholarship of the last half century is the third area that has strongly influenced the converging trends of eucharistic thought. In 1943 Catholic scholars were instructed by a papal

¹⁴Leonard Swidler, "The Eucharist in Ecumenical Perspective," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, XIII (Spring 1976), 332f.

¹⁵"Decree on Ecumenism," Sec. 4,5,8, in Walter Abbott and Joseph Gallagher (eds.) Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 347,350,352.

¹⁶Swidler, p. 334.

encyclical¹⁷ to use the methods of modern biblical criticism. Since then Protestant and Catholic biblical scholars have been converging on such important matters to eucharistic theology as early Christian worship¹⁸ and the broadening scope of eucharistic themes in both the Old and New Testaments.

The notion of sacrifice, for example, has been rescued from its limited preoccupation with death into a wider and more positive affirmation which includes offering, communion, covenant, and renewal. This provides a broader area in which the vexed question of eucharistic sacrifice can be discussed.¹⁹

There is great similarity between the trends in biblical scholarship and those we noticed in the liturgical movement in that solutions which transcend confessional pressure points are being sought and found. Professor John C. Kirby cites the "disappearance of denominational bias in the interpretation of the bible" as having an important effect on liturgical studies. Also on the subject of sacrifice he writes:

Our greater knowledge of the cultural background of the bible has shown all of us that, because the evidence was not available in the sixteenth century, both Reformers and Counter-Reformers were equally wrong in the conclusions they drew from biblical references to sacrifice. A great many of the arguments on both sides are now seen to have been based on misunderstandings of the

¹⁷Pius XII, "The Promotion of Biblical Studies (Divino Afflante)," Catholic Mind, XLII (May 1944) 257ff. Also see Keith D. Stephenson, "Roman Catholic Biblical Scholarship," Encounter, XXXIII (Autumn 1972), 303.

¹⁸For a discussion of the influence of modern exegesis on biblical theology of the eucharist see Wim Luurt Boelens, "Eucharistic Developments in the Evangelical Church," in Hans Küng (ed.) The Sacraments: An Ecumenical Dilemma (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), pp. 95-112.

¹⁹Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Eucharistic Theology Then and Now (London: 1968), p. 106.

biblical texts.²⁰

It should be clear now that these "co-operative" forces have been at work in this century affecting the convergence of eucharistic thought. Now our attention turns to the major issues of contemporary eucharistic discussion. These are the issues which for the most part underlie the practical differences we experience in ecumenical eucharistic fellowship.

ISSUES IN EUCHARISTIC DOCTRINE

In ecumenical discussion of the meaning of the eucharist, several issues stand out. Before we discuss in detail the three main "pressure points" of contemporary discussion, let us assess the progress which has been made.

First, there has been new appreciation on all sides of the relation of Word and Sacrament. The Protestant emphasis on the presence of God in the Word has often been set over against the Roman Catholic and Orthodox emphasis on the presence of Christ and his action in the sacraments - especially the eucharist. These two one-sided views have drawn closer in recognition that both Word and Sacrament belong in the normative patterns of Christian worship. Now most Protestants can affirm "that the integrity of worship demands ... scripture, sermon and sacrament."²¹ Likewise, Roman Catholics give more emphasis to the "liturgy of the Word" as one basic way in which God communicates to

²⁰Kirby, p. viii.

²¹Greenspun and Norgren, p. 236.

us.²²

A Faith and Order study on the Eucharist conducted in 1965 by representatives from the Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Orthodox, Reformed, and United Churches, with three Roman Catholic consultants, stated among its conclusions: "The proclamation of the Word of God ... quickens faith in those who are to communicate at the Lord's Table. We therefore submit that in contrast to the frequent and harmful separation between Word and Sacrament, there should be no celebration of the Eucharist that does not include the Ministry of the Word."²³

A second point of progress is the affirmation of the Lord's Supper as a sacred family meal. The biblical evidence for the eucharist to be understood as a meal is ample. In Acts we find the eucharist depicted as "the breaking of bread." The devotion of the primitive Christian community in Jerusalem centered around "the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

While the community continued daily temple attendance as the necessary act of public worship, the breaking of bread was the focal point of their distinctive Christian lives.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts praising God and having favor with all people (Acts 2:46,27a).

The joy of the breaking of bread was linked directly to the vivid recollection of the meals shared with the risen Jesus (Luke 24:30-35; 41-43; Acts 1:4; John 21:9-13).²⁴

The liturgical effects of biblical scholarship's affirmation

²²"The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," Sec. 56 in Abbott and Gallagher, p. 156f.

²³Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, p. 114.

²⁴David Stanley, "New Testament Eucharistic Doctrine," in K  ng, p. 44f.

of the eucharist as meal have been that altars are beginning to look more like tables and the celebrant does not come to the table until the sacred meal is about to be offered. Also as a normal meal, both food and drink are now used whereas until recently only the bread was shared with the faithful in some churches. Similarly, just as a private meal misses the central aspect of fellowship, so is the "private mass" no longer considered a normative liturgical act.

In some "free church" congregations emphasis on the eucharist as a community meal has caused a shift from solemn introspection which stressed individual communion with God to joyful celebrations of the community of faith around a common table.

The third area in which major progress has occurred is the understanding of the eucharist as sacrifice. This issue has raised many a stormy controversy in years past. The basic division separated Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, rigidly affirming the Mass as sacrifice, from equally rigid Protestants, denying any sacrificial aspect to the Lord's Supper as being "totally incompatible with the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary."²⁵ We have already mentioned that modern biblical scholarship has helped move churches beyond their Reformation positions²⁶ on the notion of sacrifice to a ground on which ecumenical discussion can take place.

Even with the past progress on the discussion of eucharist and

²⁵ Greenspun and Norgren, p. 248.

²⁶ For a summary of the Protestant - Catholic dispute on sacrifice see Gustaf Aulen, Eucharist and Sacrifice (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), pp. 65-102.

sacrifice, it is one of the three theological issues which underlie the practical concerns of eucharistic fellowship.

As recently as a decade ago despite the emerging ecumenical consensus on the eucharist which we have described, three issues remained without resolution. As we shall see, major breakthroughs have occurred in eucharistic agreement since 1967 in these three critical areas. But as we noted in the opening paragraphs of this paper ecumenical agreement at the bilateral or conciliar level does not mean immediate agreement or understanding by the laity of the churches. Since our concern for ecumenical worship lies there, at the congregational level, we must approach the issues of eucharistic theology from the congregational perspective.

The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

There has been a long history of deep division over the understanding of Christ's presence in the eucharist. For many years the varied understandings tended to fall into three basic categories. Although these three positions are somewhat outmoded in light of some recent bilateral agreements, it will be helpful for us to understand them as both a background of the more recent positions and as positions still expressing the beliefs of many people.

The first category is the belief that there is no real (i.e. bodily, physical) presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements. The bread and wine are only symbols of the broken body and spilled blood of Christ. The elements are only reminders or signs for the memorial of Christ's suffering. Holding close to Zwingli's doctrine of the

eucharist, there is no change of the elements during the words of institution. It is the believer who recalls the suffering of Christ through faith, not the actual presence of Christ.

A second group follows Calvin's doctrine that Christ is present in a real way, but it is a real spiritual presence. A subtle but important distinction has been made between the "spiritual presence" in the Eucharist as advocated by Calvin and by Zwingli. They both agreed in the strict dualism of spirit and matter, but they disagreed when Zwingli interpreted the words of Jesus "This is my body and blood" in a symbolic or rhetorical manner. Calvin insisted that the presence of Christ was spiritual (as opposed to physical or substantial) but "by no means represented a purely symbolic concept."²⁷ For Calvin, the Lord's Supper was actually a matter of participating in the body and blood of Christ. "The Spirit of Christ is able to unite the faithful with Christ in heaven."²⁸ The spirit of the risen Christ is present in the elements, not at the point of consecration, but in the recipient who receives them in faith.

Methodists, for example, deny the real substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ, but think of Christ as present "after a heavenly and spiritual manner" which can be only received and eaten by faith. Thus, ... the idea of eucharistic presence is mainly subjective, i.e. no presence of Christ independently of the faith of the communicant.²⁹

Still within this second category are those who combine the

²⁷Bengt Hagglund, History of Theology (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), p. 234, 264.

²⁸Ibid., p. 264.

²⁹Greenspun and Norgren, p. 239.

Calvinist belief (spiritual presence) with the evangelical understanding that one receives the "true body and blood of Jesus Christ as a nourishment in our new life."³⁰

The third group includes the Orthodox, Roman Catholics, some Anglicans, and Lutherans all of whom affirm the "real presence of Christ in or under the forms of bread and wine."³¹ The term "real presence" is problematic in that it once meant the actual physical presence of Christ in the elements, but in recent ecumenical discussions those in the other two categories see any meaningful presence of Christ in the eucharistic rite as being a "real presence." It appears then that the crux of the issue of presence is not a question of "if" but rather a question of "how" or "in what manner."

The turn of the issue of real presence from "if" to "how" is typical of many similar turns in the last decade of ecumenical discussion. The three categories of thinking we have described are being transcended in ecumenical theology today.

At the popular level, too, differences are being transcended and mixed through the common use of hymns and sometimes prayers from other traditions. The reader will recall that this was one of the suggestions for increasing ecumenical motivation we mentioned in Chapter Two. The new Hymnbook for Christian Worship, a joint Disciple and Baptist publication, contains a number of communion hymns which would not fit the "strictly memorial" category.³²

³⁰ Ibid., p. 240.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Charles H. Heaton (ed.) Hymnbook for Christian Worship (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1970), p. 302-324.

Another example comes from the folk mass era. Over a decade ago Roman Catholic youth began singing

Sons of God, hear his holy Word!
Gather 'round the table of the Lord!
Eat his Body, drink his Blood,
And we'll sing a song of love.³³

Since then this hymn has been sung around communion tables in virtually every denomination in the U.S.A. Here is a clear case of popular transcendence of official or traditional theological positions.

For many church members the differences between churches were learned and are still understood in simplistic slogans, caustic criticism, and comic caricature. Little ecumenical discussion is possible based on these attitudes.

The slow and silent movement of popular attitudes helps our concern for a positive ecumenical attitude, but we still must give attention to turning eucharistic thinking to those issues which transcend traditional and often exaggerated differences. We can do this by following the lead of the bilateral discussions.

Much of the discussion of the eucharist between Roman Catholics and Protestants has been bottlenecked with the term "transubstantiation." Leading Catholic theologians now make clear that

"substance" in modern, everyday life is something material, e.g. a chemical substance, a solid substance. But "substance" as scholastic philosophy is not material at all: it is not physical or chemical but "metaphysical," though real and objective in the world of nature.³⁴

³³James Thiem, "Sons of God," in Hymnal for Young Christians (Chicago: Friends of the English Liturgy Publ., 1967), p. 40.

³⁴Quinn, p. 72.

So while transubstantiation is still a part of Catholic dogma, Catholics can generally accept the modern Protestant view that "transubstantiation was a Roman Catholic effort at a particular time to achieve the most adequate expression of the eucharistic faith inherited from the tradition."³⁵

The Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine of the Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission (The Windsor Statement) relegates the formerly troublesome term "transubstantiation" to a footnote, making clear that it denotes a "mysterious and radical change" of the inner reality of the elements. It affirms the fact of Christ's presence but is not understood to explain how the change takes place.³⁶ Thus the Commission found it possible to find an acceptable expression of eucharistic doctrine which did not presuppose acceptance of "any particular metaphysical system, such as Thomist Aristotelianism...."³⁷

Surprisingly similar statements of agreement are found in the Roman Catholic bilateral conversations with the Lutheran and Presbyterian/Reformed churches.³⁸

³⁵Ross Mackenzie, "Reformed - Catholic Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, XIII (Spring 1976), 259.

³⁶"An Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine," in Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Modern Eucharistic Agreement (London: 1974), p. 28,31.

³⁷E. L. Mascall, "Recent Thought on the Theory of the Eucharist," in Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, A Critique of Eucharistic Agreement (London: 1975), p. 72. Also see Kenan B. Osborne, "Contemporary Understandings of the Eucharist," in Journal of Ecumenical Studies, XIII (Spring 1976), 197ff.

³⁸An excellent short survey of the most recent progress in Roman Catholic bilateral discussion is Swidler (ed.) "The Eucharist in Ecumenical Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, XIII (Special Issue, Spring 1976).

Before we go on with the discussion we should pause for reflection about a basic methodological difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants. It would be helpful at this point for Catholics and Protestants to discuss how their respective churches have dealt with matters of understanding doctrine. Protestants often criticize Catholics for the rigid regulation of doctrine by decree allowing no dissent within the church. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, have seen the seemingly endless fragmentation of Protestantism over doctrinal matters great and small.

The present discussion of how the term "transubstantiation" has been dealt with can be illuminating for ecumenical discussion among the laity. The contemporary view of Catholic theologians has come by their diligent efforts to understand (and make understood) dogma for the modern person. The Catholic theologian must "practice his art within the realm of faith of the church," says Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner.³⁹ Rahner has probed and pressed Catholic doctrine to its limits and in doing so has explained and reformulated doctrine in ways that in many cases transcend traditional objections and allow ecumenical discussion on a new level.

Protestants should reflect on this method of understanding doctrine. Certainly it is slower and requires patience, but the authority and unity of the church is preserved. Catholics should similarly reflect on the varying degrees of doctrinal freedom within Protestantism

³⁹Louis Roberts, The Achievement of Karl Rahner (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. viii.

and weigh their merits.

This brief detour on methodology raises a host of ecumenical issues which we cannot address here, but it gives us an idea of some of the meat for discussion that is contained in these issues.

Returning to the issue of the real presence of Christ in the eucharist, it would be incorrect to suggest complete agreement among the churches. For the most part, those churches which follow the Zwinglian doctrine that the elements are external signs are beginning to consider other aspects of the Lord's Supper. Ecumenical discussion is helping Methodism recover much of the Wesleyan emphasis on the eucharist which had been neglected.⁴⁰ Likewise Baptist and Disciple thinking shows a clear trend beyond memorialism toward a fuller view of the Lord's Supper including the concepts of sacrifice, presence, fellowship meal, and eschatological feast.⁴¹

The Reformed churches are not in as much agreement with the Catholic church as their bilateral statement might seem to suggest. The problem we have mentioned several times of the high level official theologians believing one thing and most lay people believing another is operative here. While most Presbyterians claim Calvin as their founder they generally understand eucharistic presence in the Zwinglian "symbolic" sense. There is a greater ecumenical theology in the Reformed roots than in present practice.⁴²

⁴⁰J. Robert Nelson, "Methodist - Catholic Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, XIII (Spring 1976), 277.

⁴¹Arthur Crabtree, "Baptist - Catholic Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, XIII (Spring 1976), 298ff.

⁴²Mackenzie, p. 265.

A good process for the study groups might be to examine the texts of communion hymns selected by the group members. Individuals could bring to the ecumenical study group hymns which expressed their belief about the Lord's Supper. Questions such as these would help the discussion: Does your congregation sing this? Does it express what you believe? Are you unable to sing it?

In eucharistic fellowship several practical differences emerge out of the theological understandings of real presence. The first is the manner of administration of the elements. Those churches which have a stronger affirmation of the real presence tend to practice administration of the elements from common chalice and loaf or wafer, by the priest/minister, individually to the communicants. In some practices the bread dipped into wine (this method is called intinction) is placed by the priest/minister in the mouth of the communicant. In others, the wafer or piece of bread is placed in the communicant's hand.

Because Christ is believed to be present in the elements of bread and wine these methods of administration all are intended to take every precaution that the elements will not be dropped or spilled.

In the churches where the eucharist has taken a back seat to preaching for many years and in those whose doctrine is of a memorial supper or only a "spiritual presence," administration of the elements is often accomplished by passing trays of individual cups and pieces of bread or wafers among the people.

The individual reception of the elements from a common source via the priest/minister stresses God's action in Christ being received almost passively by the people. Community is symbolized in the elements

coming from one cup and one loaf. Individual action is evidenced in coming to the table.

Those who are accustomed to receiving the elements from the priest/minister at the altar often think the passing of the elements in trays weakens the symbolism of the common cup and loaf. But in classical congregational ecclesiology Christ makes himself known through the church as congregation rather than through a priest. Individuals sit in the sanctuary as a congregation to receive the meal as it is brought to them by deacons in the role of waiters -- the original secular meaning of the word. In this method each person actively "takes and eats." Sometimes people in the pews serve each other as the trays are passed, and this action reinforces the community aspect of the meal.

The ecumenical sharing of a eucharistic fellowship should include open discussion of the various methods of administration of the communion elements. Optimally participants in the fellowship should also experience the various methods and share their reactions in ecumenical discussion. The discussion of methods is aimed at giving people a chance to say what the Lord's Supper in their tradition means to them, not just to hear again the old rigid differences.

The amount and type of bread and wine used is a second point of practical concern. Unleavened bread was probably introduced into the eucharistic rite in the first half of the ninth century and soon took the form of a pure white wafer.⁴³ What was gained in the intellectual

⁴³Bard Thompson, Liturgies of the Western Church (New York: Fontana, 1972), p. 43.

identification with the unleavened bread of the Passover and the symbolic color of the wafer was lost in the disassociation of the eucharist from the meal of everyday life. Growing popular interest in the use of leavened bread may correct this imbalance.

While most Christians claim that we are "nourished" in the Lord's Supper by the gifts of bread and wine, it is amazing how little nourishment we actually receive! Certainly we do not intend to turn the eucharist into gluttony but the tiny tasteless tablets of bread or the wafers which seem to melt in one's mouth both leave one wanting for real bread.

The use of wine or grape juice is one of the practical differences which does not arise out of deep theological differences. This is not to say, however, that it is not an emotionally packed issue for some Christians. While the argument for the use of wine finds ample support in the Bible and church tradition, the use of grape juice

developed in a social milieu, conditioned by the prohibition movement which opposed the drinking of all alcoholic beverages and was part of the church's witness to an urgent social problem.⁴⁴

In communities where feelings on this issue are intense, carefully led discussions and the willingness to allow time for listening and thinking will be necessary. Probably very few people would assert that eucharistic celebrations using wine, for example, were invalid. Starting with that point in a discussion might help people understand that the differences on this point are more of personal and social

⁴⁴COCU, Guidelines for Interim Eucharistic Fellowship (Princeton: 1973), p. 7.

preference than they are of doctrine. The give and take of ecumenical discussion must always seek to agree in essentials. It should be pointed out that it is possible to use both grape juice and wine in one service by using two chalices or an arrangement of individual cups in trays which visually separates the different beverages.

The third practical difference arising from differing theological understandings of the eucharist concerns reverent disposition of the elements. Because of the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements after consecration, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and some others believe that any bread and wine remaining after the service should be reverently disposed of. The remaining elements are usually consumed by the minister(s) and/or by members of the congregation, or a portion may be retained to administer to the sick or absent members.

Respect for this critical concern of some Christians should be given by those of other beliefs in ecumenical worship. Even for those who disagree with the theological reason for reverent disposition of the elements, the current awareness of the global food crisis and the widespread waste of food in the U.S.A. should sensitize Christians to recover the basic sanctity of food in human culture and to be symbolically consistent with that awareness in the Lord's Supper.

If the meal structure of the eucharist is grasped, some of the practical differences can be resolved. It is logical to clean up after a meal, so should we not also "clean up" after the Lord's Supper? Some churches bring the trays of elements back to the table after everyone is served. While this may be a well-meaning action of reverence and order, it is like bringing dirty dishes back to the dinner table after

the supper is completed.

We close this section on the presence of Christ in the eucharist with a reminder of the difference between eucharistic agreement on the bilateral or conciliar level and the understanding and practice of that agreement by the laity.

After the 41st International Eucharistic Congress held in Philadelphia in 1976, J. Robert Nelson made this report:

"Catholics believe that Christ is really present in the Eucharist," said the Philadelphia TV newscaster, "but Protestants say he is only symbolically present." The half-minute notice on the August 5 evening news thus distorted and dismissed the significance of a unique theological symposium at the International Eucharistic Congress.⁴⁵

While we might hope that our people in the pew are better informed on the subject of eucharistic agreement than was this newscaster, we would be more realistic to expect similar simplification and distortion from our people as well.

I reiterate that the discussion and study involved in starting a eucharistic fellowship must take seriously the existing beliefs of the people. The "good news" of the emerging ecumenical consensus needs to be shared and understood if a vital eucharistic fellowship is to come into being.

The Understanding of Ministry and the Eucharist

A major issue in ecumenical discussion is the mutual recognition of ministries. It directly affects the discussion on eucharist

⁴⁵J. Robert Nelson, "The Bread of Life for the Life of the World," Christian Century, XCIII (December 1, 1976), 1076.

since some believe that the validity of the eucharist depends on the validity of the priest/minister. Before we discuss the problem of ministry and eucharist in local IEFs, we will look at the progress of ecumenical interface in the Faith and Order conferences, COCU, and the bilateral conversations.

The first two world conferences on Faith and Order in 1927 and 1937 both recognized the need for "a ministry acknowledged in every part of the Church as possessing the sanction of the whole Church."⁴⁶ Differences in the understandings of "authority" and the "function" of ministry were so great that for two decades no attempt was made to deal with the topic except in connection with other ecumenical themes.

During this period, the converging effects of the ecumenical movement and historical and biblical research combined with an increased emphasis on the ministry of the laity to enable new approaches to ecumenical discussion of ministry. A number of Faith and Order discussions and papers since 1963 have been brought together in the ministry section of One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry. It is

an attempt to survey the present ecumenical debate... to indicate the emerging common perspectives which may lead to agreement required for the full mutual recognition of the ministries.⁴⁷

COCU also has had difficulty with full mutual recognition of ministries. At the 13th plenary at Bergamo, November 1976, the chapter on ministry of the statement of theological consensus (In Quest of a

⁴⁶World Council of Churches, p. 60.

⁴⁷Ibid.

Church of Christ Uniting) was predictably problematic.

COCU proposes a three-fold ordained ministry of bishops, presbyters (elders, priests), and deacons. Presbyters have a primary duty to baptize and to preside at the celebration of the Eucharist as recognized representatives of the Church's ministry in Christ, and thus to offer, with all the people, spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God (I Pet. 2:5).⁴⁸

In the bilateral conversations three significant agreements have been reached along with many more fruitful discussions which have not yet resulted in complete agreement. The Anglican - Roman Catholic Consultation in the U.S.A. was "convinced of the authenticity of each other's ordained ministry and propriety of mutual recognition...."⁴⁹

While avoiding the key terms "validity" and "mutual recognition" the Catholic - Presbyterian/Reformed conversation affirmed that "Christ is operative, however differently, in the ministries of both churches...."⁵⁰

The Lutheran - Catholic consultation brought the following Catholic statement which could be a breakthrough on the sticky issue of episcopal ministries.

The Catholics noted that "in the history of the church there are instances of priests (i.e., presbyters) ordaining other priests, and there is evidence that the church accepted and recognized the ministry of priests so ordained." They also wrote that because, "in the first two centuries of Christianity apostolic succession in doctrine (fidelity to the gospel) was considered more important than simple succession in office or orders...despite the lack of

⁴⁸COCU, "In Quest of a Church of Christ Uniting," Mid-Stream, XVI (January 1977), 87.

⁴⁹Swidler, p. 337.

⁵⁰Ibid.

episcopal succession, the Lutheran church by its devotion to gospel, creed, and sacrament has preserved a form of doctrinal apostolicity."⁵¹

The concept of doctrinal apostolicity as giving validity to ministry without episcopal succession could be the gateway through which churches of episcopal and non-episcopal ministries might find mutual recognition possible. If the Lutheran - Roman Catholic dialogue results in official pronouncement by the Catholic Church that Lutheran ministry is valid on the basis of fidelity to the gospel, the case for this method of recognition of non-episcopal ministries will be even stronger.

On the practical level in IEF, the problem of mutual recognition of ministries comes up most pointedly in reference to the Episcopal Church and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), both members of COCU. Of the ten COCU churches only the Episcopal Church insists a valid eucharist must have as its president (or among copresiders) a priest ordained by a bishop in apostolic succession. At the other extreme are the Disciples who do not require an ordained minister to preside at the Lord's Supper. In many Disciple congregations local elders preside, but an increasing number of Disciples now combine a communion meditation and the words of institution being said by an ordained minister with the prayers of thanksgiving for the bread and cup being extemporaneously offered by two elders.

One may ask if these two denominations are not "strange

⁵¹ Ibid.

bedfellows" for COCU. In the sense of lay versus episcopally ordained presidents of the Lord's Supper, they certainly are, but in the sense that they are the two COCU churches which offer the eucharist every Sunday and affirm its centrality to the Christian life, they are not.

The requirements of the Episcopal Church for an Episcopal priest to be involved in ecumenical eucharistic worship have, for the most part, been met in COCU by using concelebration.

Concelebration originally meant "a specific rite in which several priests say the mass together, consecrating the same bread and wine."⁵² It has been revived in the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II and is finding increased use in ecumenical circles in an attempt to overcome the problem of intercommunion. There is an obvious visual sign of unity and diversity in ecumenical services when the ministers of the IEF churches gather around one table to lift their voices together in praise and prayer.

The Archbishop's Commission on Intercommunion called this practice "joint celebration" and made it clear that joint celebration should be seen as a way of expressing reciprocal intercommunion, not as a way of making it acceptable by cloaking scruples about the status of ministries involved. It may commend itself as an appropriate and honest way of celebrating together in a situation where the one loaf and the common cup correspond to a genuine spiritual reality, but where there is no single authorized ministry but mutual recognition of differing ministries and mutual acceptance of communicants.⁵³

Concelebration does serve to overcome most of the practical

⁵²A. A. King, "Concelebration," in Davies, p. 144.

⁵³Archbishop's Commission on Intercommunion, Intercommunion Today (London: Church Information Office, 1968), p. 114.

issues stemming from our lack of full mutual recognition of ministries, but it should not be merely comfortably accepted as an achieved goal. Two points are still lacking. Some church people may be sensitive to the requirements of the Episcopal Church on the issue of ministry and eucharist and may resent always having to "do it on their terms," i.e., with an Episcopal priest involved as a president. Our study/discussion groups should listen for this feeling and try to give it open expression. Maximum growth can occur around the many-sided table of ecumenical discussion only if issues and feelings are out in the open.

The second point concerns the Disciple concept of the lay elder. Unique in all Christendom,

Disciples and (their) various separated cousins maintain an office now regarded as laity rather than clergy which nevertheless continues to perform the central function of presiding over the eucharist, a function which every other church reserves to the ordained ministry.⁵⁴

The Disciple response to A Plan of Union noted that virtually all respondents affirmed that any worthy lay person so designated by the congregation "may preside over a given celebration of the Eucharist, without ordination."⁵⁵ While this is a strong concern in which Disciples pride themselves, it is an often mistaken part of Disciples history. The elder of the early Disciple movement was ordained but was not a professional.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Ronald E. Osborn, "Ordained Ministry for a Vital Church," Mid-Stream, XIII (Spring-Summer 1974), 76.

⁵⁵Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), "Response to A Plan of Union for the Church of Christ Uniting," Christian, CX (August 13, 1972), 9.

⁵⁶See Ronald E. Osborn, "The Eldership Among the Disciples of Christ," Mid-Stream, VI (Winter 1967), 74-112.

In COCU, Disciples have tried to clarify the proper distinction between professional and non-professional presbyter; i.e. between the socially defined role of members of the clergy (whose income is from religious activity or identity) and the ecclesiologically defined roles of various orders of ministry (regardless of income producing occupation).

What I have called "the give and take" of ecumenical discussion does not mean "giving up" or "taking away." Rather it implies a flexible and open attitude in those matters which prevent free discussion. The Catholic position on transubstantiation, for example, was rigidly frozen for many years, perhaps as a defense against Protestant attacks. Only when the Catholics let the issue thaw enough to look at it with 20th century eyes were they able to interpret it in ways more acceptable to them and to Protestants.

The uniqueness Disciples bring to the question of ministry and the eucharist should not be allowed to be swallowed up in ecumenical discussion. This important issue could be a priceless gift to COCU and the wider ecumenical fellowship. It could be a means "of distinguishing between order and employment, of recovering the value of a ministry shared by persons involved in secular work, of providing a kind of 'tent-making ministry' in our time."⁵⁷ Returning to the practical problem of concelebration, while some Disciple lay elders have participated at the Lord's Table in ecumenical services, Disciple clergy are

⁵⁷Osborn, "Ordained Ministry," p. 76. Also see World Council of Churches, p. 44 for validity of non-salaried ordained ministries.

more often found there. In COCU's Guidelines for IEF, concelebration is defined as "the mutual leadership (collegiality) in the eucharist of a number of ordained ministers from one tradition or from different churches." (underlines added)⁵⁸

We close this section on ministry and the eucharist with a challenge presented by German theologian Edmund Schlink to delegates of the third World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund, Sweden in 1952.

Everyone should question himself how far he or his denomination has made himself Lord of the Lord's supper.... The refusal of intercommunion because of difference in the order of the Church's ministry can be an expression of the fact that ministerial office is no longer thought of as an instrument of God's dealings with men but has acquired a significance on its own account, which hinders the action of the one Lord. It may happen here that, in the place of the ministry which was instituted by God's free act, a caste of people and a man-made legal order have emerged which impede the saving and gathering act of God's mercy.⁵⁹

Eucharist and Sacrifice

The third main issue in eucharistic ecumenical discussion concerns the view of the Lord's Supper as sacrifice. We have already mentioned this in the section concerning areas where significant progress has been made, but it still is one of the "pressure points" in discussion today. For a long time polemical rhetoric has simply repeated the Protestant insistence that Christ made the once-and-for-all sacrifice on Calvary and the Catholic and Orthodox view that the mass is indeed a sacrifice of Christ.

⁵⁸COCU, Guidelines, p. 9.

⁵⁹Edmund Schlink, "Church's Supper or Lord's Supper?" in Baillie and Marsh, p. 300f.

Max Thurian's The Eucharistic Memorial has been one of the newer explanations which has helped move debate beyond old battle lines.

In the eucharistic prayer the Church does not offer a mere human reality; it is enabled to present to the Father, along with its own poverty-stricken offering, the unique and perfect sacrifice of Christ.⁶⁰

The most recent statement on the Lord's Supper from COCU comes close to Thurian's position when it says

His high priestly act of sacrifice gathers up our self-offerings of praise, thanksgiving, and service, and unites them with his own.⁶¹

Some modern theories assert that the sacrifice in the mass cannot add anything to the one-time sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, but that in re-actualizing the sacrifice in the eucharist we willingly participate in the work of Christ and receive God's grace as a result. Another view maintains that the purpose of a sacrament is to cause what it signifies, that is,

since the eucharist surely signifies the sacrifice of Christ ... it makes this reality of Calvary somehow present, so that we today can be swept up into it as really as those who first witnessed it in a spirit of faith.⁶²

Almost all of the bi-lateral conversations have come to a convergence of thinking on the eucharist as sacrifice on these points:

1. the sacrifice of Christ is adequate and unrepeatable;
2. this sacrifice of Christ's extends not only to his death, but to the whole of his life;
3. though that sacrifice is unrepeatable, the Eucharist is the

⁶⁰Max Thurian, The Eucharistic Memorial (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961), p. 78.

⁶¹COCU, "In Quest of a Church," p. 80.

⁶²Greenspun and Norgren, p. 249.

Church's celebration of Christ's sacrifice, making it present and sharable now;

4. that re-presenting is explained largely by the notions of sign and "memorial" (anamnesis).⁶³

Disciples and Baptists, to the extent that they hold rigidly to particular tradition, are furthest from affirming sacrificial aspects of the Lord's Supper, with Methodists, Presbyterian/Reformed and UCC being in closer agreement with the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican position.⁶⁴

The main practical differences that are experienced in this connection are the symbol of altar or table and the concept of offering. The concept of the eucharist as meal has for the most part properly brought the eucharistic table out from the wall so that people can be "around the table," i.e., the minister faces the congregation from behind the table.

The concept of offering in the non-liturgical churches is usually thought of as a collection of money for the work of the church. It is one's self-offering (Romans 12:1) in the form of money which symbolizes labor, possessions, and abilities. There is less emphasis on understanding the offering as the church's offering the elements for the sacrificial meal. Thus in many of the non-liturgical churches the offering is not connected with the eucharist at all. Education and growth toward a broader concept of offering in all the churches could

⁶³Swidler, p. 338.

⁶⁴Jack Lindquist, "Sacraments - How Various Denominations View Them," in Graymoore Ecumenical Institute, Ecumenical Study Guide on the Eucharist (Garrison, NY), p. 8f.

be the result of ecumenical sharing. The sources cited in Bibliography C give further detailed data on the offering and its relation in the liturgy to eucharist.

The brevity of the discussion of eucharist and sacrifice compared to the sections on "presence" and ministry is indicative of its considerably smaller role in ecumenical discussions today. Most scholars from all traditions affirm aspects of the eucharist as sacrifice. Only time will increase the popular understanding and acceptance of the ecumenical consensus on this subject.

This concludes our discussion of the highlights of the major theological issues of ecumenical eucharistic worship which underlie practical differences. The main points of the current ecumenical situation have been presented in summary form with the intent that they will be the focus of discussion and study by laity and clergy in eucharistic fellowship.

A FORMAT FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

The Living Room Dialogues publications beginning in 1965 were a guide for lay discussion among Catholic, Orthodox and Protestants. The program called for groups of 12 to 15 people to meet together in each others homes for monthly informal discussion, study, and prayer. The purpose was threefold: (1) to involve individual laypersons in the concerns of Christian unity, (2) to remove confusion and misunderstanding about different Christian traditions, and (3) to nourish mutual appreciation of the faith and worship of each other's church.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Greenspun and Norgren, p. 7.

The Living Room Dialogues model provides an excellent format for the ecumenical study and discussion that is essential to ecumenical worship. While the Living Room Dialogues series covered a broad range of topics ranging from liturgy to social action, the informal gatherings arranged as part of an IEF would deal especially with the theology of the eucharist in ecumenical perspective.

The typical "dialogue" meeting would include a litany or unison prayer, a Bible reading and comment on it, and then several discussion questions and a closing prayer.

Resource readings can be taken from this chapter as well as the original source documents cited in footnotes and bibliographies.

Each dialogue group should have a discussion leader or perhaps co-leader. The following guidelines for discussion leaders are quoted in their entirety from Living Room Dialogues:

1. You will want to choose a moderator or discussion leader, or you may rotate this responsibility each time. You may want co-leaders, a Roman Catholic and a Protestant, a man and a woman.
2. How about an observer, a different one each time, not to take part in the discussion, but to observe the process and to give positive suggestions for improving it next time?
3. In the first session, take time for each person to identify himself or herself - who each is - something of his interests and concerns -- his church, etc.
4. Help to set the stage for learning, growing and sharing, caring, by listening to what is really being said, by accepting each person's contribution and by not judging them. Be open to all ideas and suggestions whether you agree with them or not. By your own attitude of willingness to learn and change, you will encourage others to do the same.
5. Take responsibility for helping with the discussion not having to talk all the time, not having to be right or to prove a point. Help to keep some from monopolizing by encouraging each person to participate. If this is difficult, you might take turns at first to give everyone a chance to participate.
6. Help to distinguish facts from opinion, but encourage both.
7. If the group seems to wander, help to recall them to the subject under discussion. Don't try to cover more than one subject

in an evening.

8. Set a firm closing hour and stick to it. Better to go home eager for more than exhausted! Two hours should be the maximum time.

9. By your own prayer and worship life, help the members of the group to center their interaction, their questioning and seeking in shared and varying kinds of prayer within the group.

10. Become better acquainted yourself with the wealth of resources of the Churches involved, and of the Christian Faith, and share these with others.

11. Ask God the Holy Spirit to lead and to change the members of the group, so that individually and corporately they may find new ways of behaving as Christians, in the Church and in the world.

Ideas will change but so will lives.⁶⁶

In addition to the informal lay study groups, the clergy of a community might desire to carry on a deeper study of the theological and pastoral issues that arise in ecumenical worship. This study and sharing could add considerable depth and insight to the leadership of congregations in the IEF. The formation of a clergy study group might be the first step toward an IEF in a community (i.e., might become the "contact group"), or it could come later as the series of eucharistic celebrations begins.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have presented, on both the theological and practical levels, the core of what ecumenical eucharistic worship is all about. Regardless of how individuals, congregations, and committees organize eucharistic fellowship everything culminates in the actual eucharist when individuals and churches of different backgrounds gather around the Lord's Table.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 8-10.

We have seen an emerging ecumenical consensus in eucharistic thinking coming from the liturgical movement, the ecumenical movement, and modern biblical scholarship. Great progress has been made regarding the necessity of both Word and Sacrament in worship, on understanding the eucharist as a sacred family meal, and on the previously divisive issue of the sacrificial aspect of the eucharist.

We have given particular attention to the three main issues where the most striking breakthroughs have been made and which still underlie practical differences at the congregational level. These three include the presence of Christ in the eucharist, the understanding of ministry and the eucharist, and the understanding of the eucharist as sacrifice.

Finally a format for the study/discussion groups was suggested based on the Living Room Dialogues model.

Chapter Four will suggest a process to evaluate ecumenical worship.

Chapter 4

A PROCESS TO EVALUATE ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

In recent times virtually every institution has paid more and more attention to the science of management. The growth of a whole academic field of management and the resultant output of a new breed of managers is not an unexpected occurrence in a world that becomes bigger and more complex with each passing day.

The church, in its varying degrees of institutional character, has begun to be interested in applying managerial concepts to itself. Terms like goals, objectives, evaluation, feedback, etc., are common verbiage for a church board meeting today.

In this chapter we will look at one part of the management process,¹ evaluation, and apply it to ecumenical worship. We will look briefly at the evaluation of worship in general and then at the somewhat brighter possibilities for evaluation of ecumenical worship. Finally we will look at the critical points in our process for developing an IEF in a community and suggest several factors especially important to the evaluation of ecumenical worship.

Despite the increasing use of management principles by churches, one area which usually remains untouched by management is worship. In one sense evaluation of worship always has been done and always will

¹The "management process" consists of varying elements depending on which theory of management is employed. Management By Objectives stresses three points: Planning, implementing, evaluating. Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell, Principles of Management (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972) suggest a five-fold system: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling.

be. This evaluation is voiced in the car on the way home from the Sunday morning services or is scribbled on bulletin backs and passed to a neighbor during the service. Typical evaluative comments are familiar to all of us: "The organ was too loud." "I wish he would preach on something beside the parables." "The choir always sounds so beautiful." "I can never hear the worship leader." As helpful as these comments might be if properly channeled and interpreted, they are generally a wasted resource expended by the congregation.

Worship is seen by most people as an off-limits area for evaluation for several reasons. Perhaps one reason why all other areas of church life can be subjected to the management process and worship cannot is that worship is popularly understood as ultimately different from the rest of congregational life. It is "religious." A church school program, a financial campaign, or an outreach emphasis all are seen as appropriate activities to be evaluated, but not worship.

If worship is properly understood as "the work of the people," a human activity of expressing a relationship to God, then we may be more willing to apply the principles of good management to worship. When we evaluate worship, the corporate expression of our faith, we are not applying a secular tool to the Divine, but are using a helpful human science to assist our human activity for God.

A second reason for the reluctance to evaluate worship is based on human personalities. One pastor who has made sweeping changes in the worship and church school program of his church tells of a conversation with a woman from another congregation who was interested in "jazzing up" their church school. As he began to question her about

the worship service too she responded, "Oh, we're not concerned with worship. We like our minister."² Regard for the minister and concern for worship are not mutually exclusive! This represents a second reason why many congregations shy away from evaluation of worship: it is believed to be the "minister's domain."

If evaluation of worship is to take place in churches, these two misconceptions about its being an affront to God or an invasion of clerical domain must be corrected.

In shaping its worship, the church today finds itself in a difficult but promising time. People in the churches are being influenced by new styles in music and art, by new ways of talking about God and themselves, by new patterns or relationships between people. In such a time, people in every congregation need to enter actively into the creative process of finding the most adequate way of expressing their worship to God.³

Evaluation of worship takes on different connotations in the various churches. Episcopal worship, and to some extent Presbyterian and Methodist, is ordered by the church at large through the Prayer Book, Book of Worship, etc. Ministers in these traditions have latitude for choice within an established rite. Evaluation of worship for these churches has more to do with how the liturgy is done than with what is done.

The so-called "free churches" do not have prescribed liturgical forms. Congregations and their ministers have considerable leeway in determining both the content of the worship service and the manner in

²William Beaven Abernathy, A New Look for Sunday Morning (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 10.

³Worship Study Commission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), In Spirit and With Honesty (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1975), p. 8.

which it is carried out.

It would be important for IEF liturgies to follow the COCU Order of Worship or the rite of the host church of a given eucharistic observance. In the case of the "free churches" the order of worship should typify the denomination's tradition rather than the idiosyncratic way a particular minister may do it.

When we consider ecumenical worship, we find that the need for evaluation is even greater and that that need can be met more easily than in congregational worship. The need is greater because the ecumenical congregation is a new experimental creation which does not have the luxury of a built-in tradition of its own. Conversely it does have a collection of traditions of varying degrees of similarity. The tools of management could be welcomed by all participating congregations as impartial ways of finding the most appropriate way for the new ecumenical community to express itself in worship.

The resistance to evaluation of ecumenical worship may be less than that found in congregations because ecumenical activity (even worship) is probably perceived as being more programmatic than "untouchably religious" in the sense we described earlier. Also in ecumenical worship there is no one "pastor's domain," so worship becomes everyone's domain.

But probably the most important reason why ecumenical worship can lend itself to evaluation is because evaluation can be built into ecumenical worship from the start. Let us turn our attention now to the process for evaluating ecumenical worship.

Whatever system of evaluation is used it must be integrated

into the whole plan for ecumenical worship in a community. The basic process we have suggested for developing ecumenical worship in a community is depicted in Figure 2 below.

In this process there are four critical phases in which evaluation must take place: (1) within the congregations, (2) in the planning committee, (3) at each eucharistic observance and at each study/discussion group, and (4) at the end of each series of services.

In the congregational building of an ecumenical base, evaluation of the place where the congregation already is ecumenically is the first step. Then at midpoint and at the end of the congregation's program(s) evaluation should also be made.

The planning committee should have an ongoing system of evaluation integrated into its agenda. Often this is achieved by enlisting the expertise of a carefully selected person who functions solely as an evaluator of the planning committee's inner workings.

The third evaluation phase in the process of developing ecumenical worship includes the evaluations at the eucharistic celebrations and at the study/discussion groups. These evaluations must be low-keyed so they will not interfere with the primary activity. This might best be accomplished through the use of a number of observers and listeners. These carefully chosen individuals would report back to the planning committee and sometimes directly back to congregations.

The final evaluation at the close of a series of eucharistic observances would be the most detailed evaluation of the four and would seek the broadest response possible. The questionnaire method has been effectively used in the Richmond IEF.

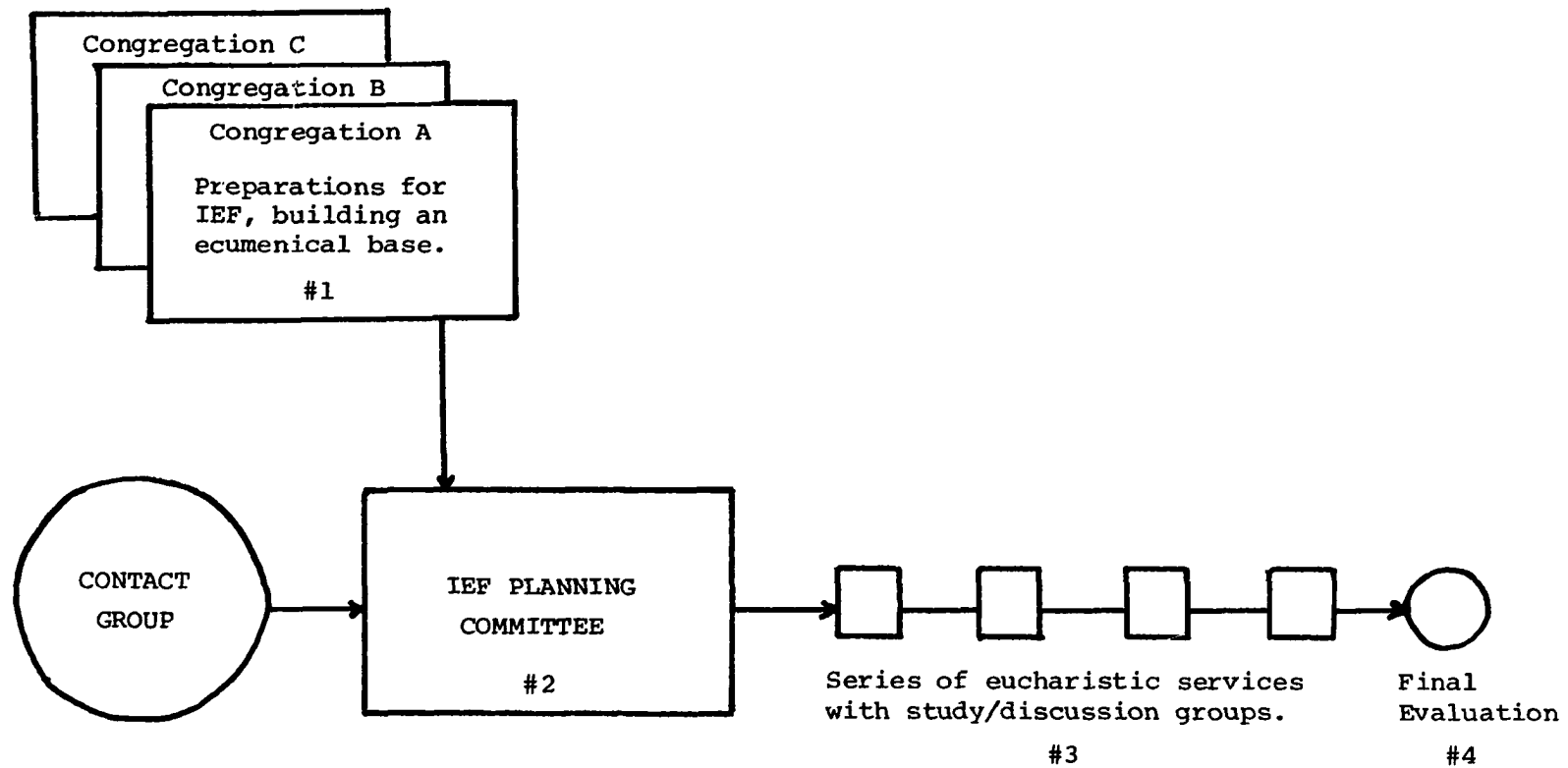


Figure 2
Basic Process for IEF

The evaluations in these four phases of the process should all have these characteristics:

- (1) The type of evaluation must reflect the particular needs and nature of the activity it evaluates.
- (2) It must give prompt reports so that corrective action is possible.
- (3) It must operate within the organizational pattern of the whole process.
- (4) It should lead to corrective action.⁴

So far the discussion has been of general principles of evaluation applied to our process of developing ecumenical worship. We cannot suggest in this project detailed evaluative instruments. These must be developed for each particular IEF. The four general characteristics above and the critical locations in the process where evaluation must take place will be applicable in almost every situation.

Here is how the diagram of our process would look with evaluation systems integrated. See figure 3.

Several examples may illustrate this more fully. At (1), evaluation of the congregation's preparation may discover a major weakness in the church school curriculum which is fed back into the congregation for corrective action. In the planning committee (2), the evaluation consultant may observe that two representatives missed the last two meetings after their ideas were rejected by the committee. Once the committee is aware of this an effort might be made to regain their support. At the second ecumenical celebration of the eucharist (3), a youth group from a congregation comes to a "participant model" service

⁴Koontz and O'Donnel, p. 582.

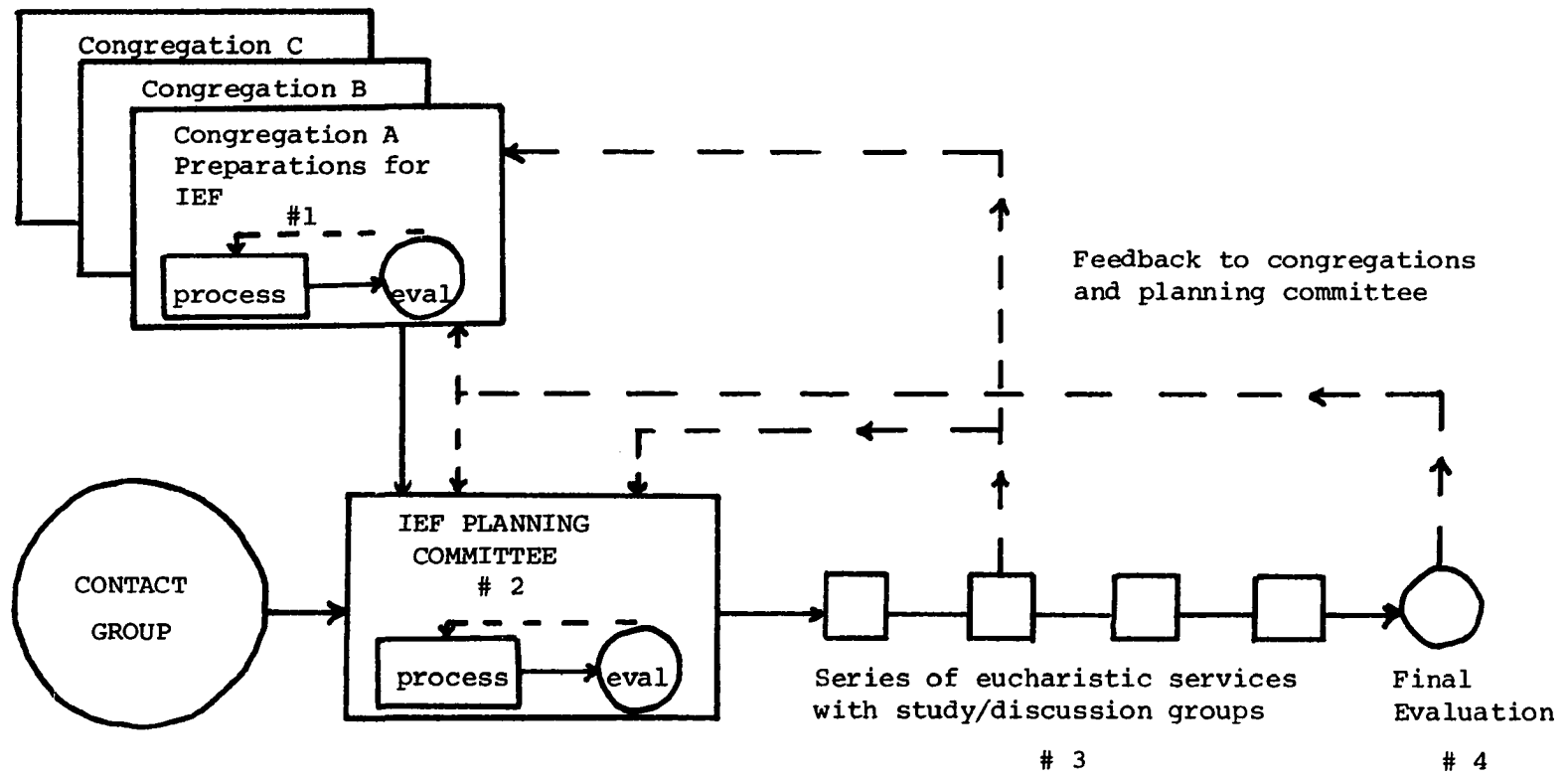


Figure 3
IEF Process with Integrated Evaluation Systems

with misinformation about the IEF. Since they are not familiar with the service or the IEF program like the other "participants," their reactions to the ecumenical service are extremely negative. In this case the observer/listener on the scene could feedback into the system at several points: to the youth group's congregation to explain the misunderstanding and to the planning committee to work out ways in which this type of incident might be avoided in future services. The final evaluation session (4), probably a questionnaire and/or talk-back plenary, sends most of its data to the planning committee but some of this data also might appropriately go back to congregations for action.

It should be clear that an evaluation system integrated into the overall process is a necessity for ecumenical worship. As a basis for the evaluation criteria which are developed by each IEF for each of the four phases of the process, three important factors are set forth.

Inclusiveness: A core attribute of the eucharistic fellowship is its effort to include the full diversity of the Christian community of an area. That means "people of all racial and ethnic origins, of all incomes, denominations, ages, both lay and clergy, both male and female; and with these an evident resolve that an Interim Eucharistic Fellowship not be a haven for neighbors in need."⁵

Genuineness: Ecumenical worship expresses the unique faith of a genuine ecumenical community. Such worship grows out of mutual personal sharing and interaction. This takes time to develop but it is distinctively more than assembling worshipping denominations under one roof.

⁵COCU, Interim Eucharistic Fellowship (Brochure).

Honesty: Interim Eucharistic Fellowship recognizes by definition its interim nature, that it has not yet arrived at the full unity Christ intends at his table. Differences do remain and they must not be glossed over with an inauthentic spirit that mocks true unity. The integrity of IEF is grounded in honest sharing of beliefs as people of faith desire to come to the Lord's Table together.

However ecumenical worship is evaluated in a particular community, these three factors are primary. The system of evaluation we have suggested cannot guarantee a trouble-free IEF but it will give early detection of problems which can be solved before they become bigger.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY

This paper comes to the church in an unprecedented climate of ecumenical consensus. It arrives on the American church scene at a time when large institutions are suspect and when "small is beautiful."¹ It speaks to a mandate of the Consultation on Church Union to establish a network of Interim Eucharistic Fellowships across the U.S.A. by the end of the decade.² Finally, it is directed to the laity and clergy of local congregations, where living together toward unity has its most important identity.

What has been attempted here is to address an urgent need of the church in the U.S.A. by integrating contemporary ecumenical theology of the eucharist with the practical problems of implementing an ecumenical eucharistic fellowship among the churches of a community. This integration could only be accomplished with the background of a number of other disciplines as well, including church history, the history of liturgy, church management and polity, and with the experience of church work in and prior to seminary training.

The result of this integration of the theoretical disciplines of the seminary and the present practical needs of the church is a handbook for local church leaders which gives them the basic guidelines,

¹E. F. Schumacher, Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

²Gerald Moede, "Accomplishments of COCU Thus Far and Some Reflections on Possible Ways into the Future" (mimeographed), p. 7.

suggestions, and resources necessary to develop an ecumenical eucharistic fellowship in their community. The depth of eucharistic theology is taken seriously but presented simply.

The handbook is small enough that one can reasonably expect it to be read and used by interested laity and clergy. Yet it provides a basic framework for starting, developing, implementing, and evaluating ecumenical worship among several congregations without overloading the reader with details which do not apply in all circumstances.

What this paper cannot provide is the motivation for the reader to get involved with other Christians and to do the work of developing a eucharistic fellowship. Although suggestions for improving ecumenical motivation have been made, no human word alone can call any of us to service.

Only when we see a vision of the One Holy Catholic Church will we realize the scandal of our division. Only when we hear the prayer of our Lord that we may all be one³ will we work toward the answering that prayer. And only when we can freely respond with all our brothers and sisters to the invitation of Jesus to His Supper will our eating and drinking of Him be fulfilled.

³John 17:22.

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